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George Romney pinxit. Emery Walker phot.

Emma, Lady Hamilton

from the painting in the National Portrait Gallery

A LIFE OF EMMA HAMILTON

BY

O. A. SHERRARD

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PREFACE

My friend, Ian Gow, the collector of autograph letters, is responsible for this book. It is some years now since he prisoned me in an armchair with a weighty volume on my knees. I opened it haphazard and stumbled straight on to the original of the letter which appears on page 16. Until that moment Lady Hamilton had been for me an historical personage—Nelson's Blight or Nelson's Inspiration, according to the last author I had read. But like so many historical personages, she had never been real flesh and blood. Somehow that ill-spelt scrawl on the dirty, crumpled paper caught at my imagination. She came to me as simply "a girl in distress, in reall distress." From that moment, I think, the writing of this book became inevitable, though it entailed frequent urging by my friend, and has caused me untold misgiving.

I could plead that plenty of fresh material has come to light since last Emma's life was written. It has, and the reader will find much of it in the following pages. But my object has been to present the actors in their more human and less historical aspect, to get at their motives and show how they were swayed by their feelings and mocked by events. As a result I have often been led to conclusions which run counter to accepted views—a fact which I deplore, but cannot help. If I have succeeded in giving her story some touch of the reality with which it came to me, I shall have done all I dare hope.

I have to express my very grateful thanks to Mr Gow for the kindness with which he placed all his manuscripts at my disposal. I have also to thank Messrs Chapman &

Hall for their ready permission to quote from the entertaining Memoirs of Comte Roger de Damas, more especially in Chapter XVI., and the description of Emma from the Journal of the Comte d'Espinchal on p. 231; to Messrs Herbert Jenkins for permission to quote the description of Emma by Sir William Hotham, on p. 232, from *Pages and Portraits from the Past*, by A. M. W. Stirling; to Messrs Longmans Green & Co., for permission to quote the letter of 10th May 1812, on p. 338, from the Letters of Harriet, Countess Granville; and to Messrs John Murray for permission to quote from the Letters of John B. S. Morritt (p. 202), the Letters of Mary Nisbet (p. 267), the Private Correspondence of Lord Granville Leveson Gower, more especially the two letters from Canning to Lady Stafford, in Chapter XIV., and Lady Bessborough's illuminating letter in Chapter XXVI., and finally from *Mary Hamilton*, which is of especial interest for the light it throws on Sir William Hamilton's arrival in England in 1783, and the feelings of his family towards his marriage.

NOTE

As biographies usually abound in footnotes and bibliographies, the absence of both in this work requires an explanation. I am afraid pure prejudice led me to omit footnotes, because my personal experience is that they irritate rather than inform. A bibliography would on the whole be misleading. There are at least a dozen previous lives of Emma, and numerous works in which she is mentioned. How much I may have borrowed from these unconsciously, I cannot say; but as my object has been principally a study of character, I have to the best of my knowledge relied entirely on the letters and memoirs of the times. When I have quoted from these, I have usually, if not always, given the writer's name in the text. For the benefit of readers who would like other views of Emma, I may mention the Memoirs of 1815 as the most scandalous, Mr Walter Sichel's Life as the fullest, and Monsieur Fauchier-Magnan's (in French) as the easiest reading.

For Nelson's character I have again depended mostly on his own letters and those of his contemporaries, but for details I have gone as a rule to Captain Mahan and Clarke and M'Arthur. There are of course numerous other lives, of which Southey's is deservedly the best known.

The documents dealing with the incidents in the Bay of Naples in 1799 have been edited by Mr H. C. Gutteridge, and published by the Navy Records Society.

In conclusion, I may perhaps mention, because I have omitted it in the text, that there is a pleasant description of Emma's Attitudes in the Memoirs of the Countess of Boigne, who, as a child, assisted Emma.

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A
LIFE OF EMMA HAMILTON

CHAPTER I

THE BEGINNING

(1)

Emma Hamilton was born on the 26th of April 1765, in the village of Great Neston, on the Wirral peninsula. She came into a puzzled and irritated world, full of brilliance and frustration, full of picturesque splendour and horrid depravity. She was in every sense a true child of her age, and her character and fortunes alike displayed its incongruous mixture of all that was wonderful and most that was vile. In her case it is more than usually true that a knowledge of her time is necessary to a proper appreciation of her life. And what a time it was! It began in the old *régime* and ended in the new, taking the French Revolution in its stride; it changed monarchies into democracies and substituted liberty for privilege, clutching at Paradise and gaining the Victorian era. Its men of genius tumbled over each other and as often as not ended in madness; its humdrum citizens unwittingly made revolutions in science, in morals, in physics and hygiene. Empires fell and rose, as though a series of earthquakes were jumbling the ancient kingdoms, and no one could tell to-day what to-morrow would bring forth.

Four and a half years before Emma was born George III. succeeded his grandfather, receiving as his most precious legacy the elder Pitt at the pinnacle of his genius, the Pitt

who in the three preceding years had given England the keys to half the world. George III. was fully aware of the greatness of his empire, but he looked at it from the angle of his upbringing. His mother had been his guide and mentor, and her one piece of advice had always been, "George, be a King." George had every intention of following that advice; he meant to be master of all he possessed. From the moment of his accession he set to work so resolutely to crush all rivals that in precisely one year he had ousted Pitt. Having humbled the greatest man in the land, George turned his attention to corrupting Parliament. Not that there was anything new in this, except that the fount of corruption was now the King instead of the Government. George succeeded. After putting Parliament in his pocket, he proceeded to crush the liberties of his subjects and the freedom of the Press. One might have expected such an attempt to produce another Milton or another Cromwell. Instead, there rose to sudden fame John Wilkes, a notorious scoundrel, who in spite of bullying his wife, living in a whirl of profligate pleasures and exploring the limits of licentious impiety, found himself the champion and martyr of the people's liberties.

The details of his career hardly matter. The enthusiasm which he aroused was not merely due to the causes which he represented—against his will but with surprising ability. The people of England were too near the actions of the day to grasp their full significance, and while they supported Wilkes from a variety of motives, were in effect protesting against the system of corruption and oppression which went by the name of government. In short, they were beginning in the English fashion, as a few years later the French began in theirs, to lay the foundations of modern democracy. The immediate and visible effect was to bring to a head what Burke, when Emma was five years old, called "the present discontents," and to deepen and embitter the divisions between the Parliamentary factions,

so that instead of the continual shiftings and re-arrangements of individuals, the two great political parties began to be moulded into shape. This movement coincided with Emma's youth, and the course of her life was largely decided by this trend of politicians into rival camps.

(2)

Emma's father was a blacksmith of the name of Lyon. Nothing is known of him except that he was illiterate, and died shortly after his daughter was born. Her mother, Mary Lyon, was of more importance. If she was illiterate when she married, at least she aspired to something higher, and in the days of Emma's greatness was able to win the respect of the notables among whom she found herself. On the death of her husband Mary Lyon returned to her native village of Hawarden. Here Emma lived, in the cottage of Mrs Kidd, her grandmother, till she was nearly fifteen years of age. Her life at home was one of great poverty and hardship. Outside her home she was not likely to find much that was edifying, except scenery. Hawarden is on the borders of Flint and Cheshire and claims to be a town. Actually it is a small village, and was smaller still in the middle of the eighteenth century. Villages in those days were generally self-supporting, but not conspicuous for self-respect. As a rule the squire was a boor, possibly good-humoured, and no less possibly ferocious; the parson was, as often as not, a good huntsman but a poor fisher of souls, and not infrequently in gaol. The gentry varied, but, as a rough rule of thumb, the further from London the less the polish. As for the common folk, their ignorance was profound and their poverty crushing; their main joys were brawling and drinking, gambling and poaching, and their conversation mostly "obscenity, oaths, gaming and hunting; nothing to the improvement of the mind, nor the honour of God

or man." The general atmosphere in which Emma grew up was tainted with a rough, ignorant tendency towards horseplay and vice.

Naturally in a poverty-stricken household everyone had to pull his weight, and at a very early age Emma is reputed to have driven donkeys laden with coal. Whether this is true or not, she was barely in her teens, if so much, when she entered service as a nursemaid with Mrs Thomas of Hawarden. In another year or two she was to leave for London.

In 1780 or thereabouts London was even more of a magnet than it is to-day, because the towns and cities of the Midlands hardly existed to offer rival attractions. The Court, the nobility, the wealthy all flocked to London in the season, bringing in their wake every type of humanity from the worst to the best. Among many others Emma and her mother made their way thither in the latter part of 1779 or the early part of 1780. Apparently Mary Lyon went first, and her journey seems to have been the occasion of her change of name. At all events when she next comes upon the scene she appears as Mrs Cadogan, though there is no trace of a second marriage.

Emma also changed her name, appearing in London as Emily Hart. Here, as a girl of about fifteen, she entered service in the house of Dr Budd, a physician of St Bartholomew's Hospital. The doctor was prosperous and lived in Chatham Place, named after the great statesman, and forming the north end of the then recently erected Blackfriars Bridge. Nothing authentic is known of Emma at this early age, but with her uncanny instinct for being in the centre of a storm she chose the right time and place to begin her career in excitement.

By 1780 George III. had been actual, as well as titular, ruler for just on twenty years. For twenty years chaos and disaster had been piling up; for twenty years discontent and dissatisfaction had been growing to a head.

The cup of the King's iniquities was almost full, and was destined to overflow in four years' time, when the younger Pitt was offered and accepted the post of Prime Minister. But in this year of grace, 1780, the end had not quite come, though the American War was dragging to its unworthy close, though pirates were more masters of the Channel than the Royal Navy, though Lord North, the Prime Minister, was fast being ground to dust between the upper mill-stone of the King's commands and the nether mill-stone of continual disaster, and the Government was becoming as powerless as its head.

Yet if the time was not fully ripe, there were preliminary murmurs. Two years earlier Parliament had relieved Roman Catholics of some of their legal disabilities, a fact which had alarmed the fanatical Lord George Gordon. With the best of motives and the maddest of methods he had spent those two years fomenting a "No Popery" movement. It was not a difficult task. The mob were ripe for violence, and did not bother overmuch about the cause they espoused, provided only it gave an excuse for riot. Life was too hard and troubled for them to resist the chance of plunder. So in June 1780 the ruffianly champions of No Popery foregathered in St George's Fields, on the south side of Blackfriars Bridge, and for a week held London at their mercy.

While Emma gazed with curious eyes across the river, the Government remained paralysed. It was only the indomitable resolution of the King which saved the City. He ordered out the troops while Lord North could find nothing better to do than fill his house with grenadiers and invite as many friends as possible to dinner. The company sat down to their meal with drawn swords and cocked pistols, keeping their spirits up with forced jokes, while outside the mob was breaking into houses and shops, burning, plundering, murdering. Then casks were shattered in the streets, and men and women indiscriminately

lapped raw spirits out of the gutters, adding the frenzy of drunkenness to the drunkenness of frenzy. Mad fights arose between the rioters and soldiers, and nowhere more fiercely than on Blackfriars Bridge, where the bodies of the killed were thrown into the Thames amid the rattle of muskets and the howls of the crowd.

Emma must have heard the tumult, if she did not see it, and maybe the excitement of that night stirred a hidden chord in her heart, giving her a taste for more adventure than was to be found in the house of Dr Budd. For in Dr Budd and his household Emma was brought into contact with the middle classes, those sturdy, quiet folk of whom Cowper has drawn a picture in their own homes—a picture of a family circle round the fire with the curtains drawn and the tea-urn steaming. They learnt the events of the day from their newspapers, interested from afar in the ups and downs of political life, amused at the advertisements of " roses for the cheeks, and lilies for the brows of faded age, teeth for the toothless, ringlets for the bald." While the ladies sewed, someone read history aloud, and then after dinner, music, netting and small talk. It was all very quiet, peaceful and profound—the breeding-ground of Nelson, Burke, Adam Smith, and a host of other great men—but it was not likely to thrill the maids in the kitchen below. The two in Dr Budd's kitchen were thinking very different thoughts ; one, Jane Powell, was to become a famous actress, the other, Emily Hart, was to become—what we shall see.

CHAPTER II

OUT OF THE FRYING-PAN . . .

(1)

If Emma found the mob too violent and the middle classes too dull, there were others in London who amply fulfilled her every dream. In those days the upper classes were a thing apart. Society was not a mere matter of wealth, though in fact Society included most of the money in the land. Society was a matter of ladies and gentlemen, the families which owned the great estates of the country at a time when commerce as we understand it now was only half beginning, and the landed oligarchy were at the zenith of their renown. Society was utterly sure of itself, and equally sure that the world was made for its delectation. The ladies and gentlemen of the time moved in their magic realm with an easy assurance that knew no fear nor the shadow of compunction. They dressed in accordance with their own ideas of themselves, the ladies with hooped gowns of stiff brocade and the added stature of towering head-dresses bedecked with ribbons, flowers and brilliants. Swollen out in this costly manner, they could hardly squeeze into the hackney carriages and sedan chairs—a fact that no doubt enhanced their greatness in their own eyes. The men swaggered down the narrow and dirty streets in gorgeous colours—scarlet and gold and royal blue—in silks and satins of rich hues and resplendent sheen; their cocked hats under their arms for fear of deranging their wigs; their elegant rapiers dangling at their sides; their tasselled canes depending from their wrists; and the stars and ribbons of their orders glittering on their breasts.

They quizzed the world superciliously through their glasses, and sniffed their contempt for the mob out of gold and enamel snuff-boxes, while the common herd made haste to get out of their way, and tradesmen stood hat in hand, anxious for further additions to their unpaid bills.

If they had been the waxworks which they seemed, Emma might have stood in the streets and gaped her heart away. But beneath the dandified exterior lay something very different. Society had borrowed the manners of the French, incomparable above, indescribable below, but had not thrown off the frailties of human nature. Men of mature wisdom and ripe years, as well as the gay young sparks, lived a life that would exhaust a modern Lothario in a week. "I set out last winter," writes a sober young lordling of the age, "with being what they call in fashion, but kept a very short time, for I did not at all enter into the plan of living which was necessary for to keep it up. . . . I lived, too, almost entirely with my own family, yet with all this I led such a dissipated wild life that I say plainly it could not long continue."

London was small in numbers and extent. "They tell me," writes Evelina, "that London is now in full splendour. Two playhouses are open—the Opera House—Ranelagh—and the Pantheon." She might have prolonged her list, but not very far. Those on pleasure bent had very little choice, and the chance of meetings correspondingly increased. It was not likely to be long before the Don Juans of this "dissipated wild" world would see Emma's pretty face and mark it down for their own. She had only to spend her hard-earned wages on an evening at Ranelagh or Vauxhall, where the gaiety and glitter of the central parts shaded off into "dark alleys," the home of seduction and debauchery; she need scarcely have done more than pass a free afternoon in walking down the Mall to admire the fine throng. The difficulty was not to be seen, but to

be hidden. There were opportunities and to spare for gallants to note her charms, and neither the age nor its gallants were backward in following their desires.

Rumour has been busy with Emma's youth. It has pushed her into all manner of strange places and occupations. If the half of them are founded on fact, she must have spent a full life. She sold fruit—uncommonly like Nell Gwynn ; she appeared, draped or undraped according to taste, in the " temple " of a quack doctor ; she was in the service of a dealer in St James's Market ; she was companion to a risky lady of fashion ; she was something or another at Drury Lane Theatre ; she was a parlour-maid, an artist's model, the mistress of a naval captain. There is no need to rake up the scandals ; they are culled out of sensational memoirs, and based on gossip. They may or may not have been true, but they deal at most with a very short period, and add nothing to our knowledge of Emma's character.

At the outside about eighteen months elapsed between her first arrival in London and her establishment as a recognised mistress. From that point onwards the facts of her life are known. How many of those eighteen months were passed beneath the roof of Dr Budd may be decided according to taste. It is possible that she appeared in one or other of the guises that scandal has depicted ; it is possible that she divided her time between illicit delights and domestic duties ; it is possible that she remained an honest servant until she occupied the next position of which we have authentic knowledge.

But whatever the incidents of these eighteen months, the time had now arrived when Emma, like Helen of Troy, was for her beauty to become the sport and plaything of men. " Oh, Fan," wrote Mr Crisp to Fanny Burney, " this is not a marrying age, without a handsome fortune." It was not, and consequently it was an age that understood and practised the art of mistresses. To the young men of

fashion a mistress was perfectly natural and the rules of the game perfectly well defined. It was pitifully easy for a gaily-dressed "macaroni" to beguile a simple girl. The bonds of virtue have always lain light on youth, and never lighter than when vice was a mere gentlemanly failing if performed with an air. High-flown compliment was the language of the age, which believed that women could be treated like dirt provided they were addressed like angels, and Emma always had a child-like greed for flattery. None was ever too gross for her to accept, and her undoubted beauty must have forced a passing note of sincerity on to the bombast of the day. Someone whispered extravagant nothings in her ear, and she paid him with all she had. Whoever the someone was, and whenever he did the deed, it is a fact that about the end of the year 1780 two fashionable young men hankered after this tempting morsel—Sir Harry Fetherstonehaugh and the Hon. Charles Greville.

Sir Harry was a devil-may-care young baronet, with plenty of money and an eye for the ladies; no brains, but a French polish that sat awkwardly on his British beef.

Greville was cast in another mould. He possessed to an eminent degree the one virtue of a coward—the virtue of caution. He had less money than Sir Harry but greater ambitions, fewer estates but a more cultivated taste, and he collected pictures, minerals, and objects of vertu half as a connoisseur, half as a dealer.

Which of her two beaux Emma would choose could hardly be doubted. She was at this juncture sixteen years old, hardly able to read or write, with little or no knowledge of the world, and only a general sense of right and wrong. By nature she was open, impetuous, sincere and unsuspecting; she said the first thing that came into her head, laughed and joked freely with all and sundry; she was full of spirits and uncontrolled—a beautiful wild creature. The natural man in Sir Harry would inevitably appeal to

this child of nature rather than Greville's washy refinement. The bull-headed young baronet gained the first round with ease, and carried off his prize in triumph to his Sussex estate.

(2)

Emma arrived at Up Park in the early summer of 1781, somewhere about her sixteenth birthday, or a little later. She left it again at the end of the year. There was no novelty for her in the beauties of nature, which had small appeal for the age and probably none for Emma. If they had, there is scenery and to spare in that gorgeous tract of Sussex between Midhurst and Chichester where Up Park was. But the novelty and excitement lay in the fact that Emma was now for the first time seeing the country as it appeared to the wealthy owners of large estates.

The favourite diversions were hunting and drinking, dice and cards—all sociable failings that demanded a large company. Sir Harry, in the prevailing taste, filled his house with a crowd of boon companions. Whilst Emma was present, he was unlikely to entertain ladies of his own class; but ladies of the town, mistresses provided by or for his guests, were probably there in plenty. The men of the age demanded a female element at their more masculine revels, provided it was of the right type. "I am just come from a Masquerade at Almack. Triste au dernier point, only three or four girls of town," is an extract from a letter of the period, and strikes the characteristic note.

The morning would have been given up to riding, shooting and fishing. Sir Harry had plenty of horses, and no doubt endangered his own neck and those of his friends in dare-devil riding, or in the fashionable sport of racing unsteady phaetons along the narrow, ill-made roads. It

was a wild, exhilarating life, and the only antidote to the excesses of the evening. They would come in muddy and splashed, coarse-mouthed, hungry and jovial—very different from the spruce and dandified air they could assume when ladies were about and it pleased them to behave. At dinner there would be feasts served up by French cooks and washed down with gallons of wine. Emma would be the reigning toast among the rowdy crew, half fuddled with port and punch, and shouting their throats sore with rollicking choruses. And so to cards and dice and irresponsible bets, flirting and kissing and general pandemonium. At times there would be private theatricals, when Emma, if we may judge by the future, would have excelled, and the majority of the cast would have forgotten their lines prodigiously. And, last but not least, there would have been plenty of practical jokes, none too sparing of limbs and quite regardless of feelings.

What part Emma took in it all we can only guess, but the guessing is not hard. We know she was treated with the profuse liberality accorded to reigning favourites. We know she had horses, and dresses and servants and money. We know from her own confession that her youth was " wild and unthinking." We know that she was capricious, spoilt and extravagant. Five and a half guineas for coach hire was nothing to this newly-emancipated nursemaid. We know that she took to horses and rode fearlessly. In later life she had a taste for gambling and drink, and we may guess that the seeds were sown in these riotous days at Up Park.

Yet at Up Park she was more of the tomboy than the hardened sinner, and her exuberance arose from high spirits, not a longing to drown memory. The other women may have been blasé and hardened, but we can picture Emma in the candle-lighted hall, the beauty of the evening, gaily impertinent to the good-humoured crowd of youngsters, enjoying the fumes of power more than the

fumes of wine, and sparkling with a natural freshness through the clouds of smoke and oaths.

(3)

It has been so generally asserted that Greville first met Emma at Up Park that some reason should be given for describing him as Sir Harry's rival. The explanation is simple. There is no evidence that Greville ever was at Up Park, while there is the best of evidence for believing that he disliked Sir Harry and disapproved of his friends. Further, Emma cannot well have been Sir Harry's mistress for much more than six months. It is certain that before the end of that time she and Greville were on terms of closest intimacy, and such intimacy could hardly have resulted from casual visits. Other hints will appear tending toward the same conclusion.

While Emma was enjoying the pleasures of Up Park, Greville was checked but not dismayed. He continued his game, which was simply to make sure of Emma when she was free. The idea of angling for a discarded mistress may seem revolting, but it was not uncommon. "Thus each day," Olivia relates in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, "I grew more pensive, and he more insolent, till at last the monster had the assurance to offer me to a young baronet of his acquaintance." That is fiction, but cases can be found in real life. Greville himself had lived in Naples with a certain Madame Tschudi. Referring to her in a letter to his uncle he says, "It is very singular and I cannot account for my behaviour. I have since been contented with worse, but she contrived to make me perfectly disgusted with her; however, I have addressed a friend of mine, Mr Leighton, to her, and wrote a very genteel letter in Italian. I am not in the least anxious how she receives it." History does not relate if Madame Tschudi was as indignant in fact as Olivia was in fiction.

But there were other reasons for Greville's complacent attitude. He was never likely to get the cream off any milk, because he never dared to take the first step. In love, as in everything else, he waited for proposals, and heaven knows how he got as far as he did. Perhaps, too, a pedlar in antiques is accustomed to the second-hand.

So, with custom and his own nature supporting him, he set about staking out his claim, or rather manœuvring to make Emma stake it out for him. As a first step he gave her a packet of franked envelopes by which to keep in touch with him and also to provide her with a means of escape if Fetherstonehaugh should prove fickle. Whether by letters or by visits he kept himself informed of all her actions, posed as her friend, and offered advice when she was troubled or annoyed. There seems to be very little doubt that she visited him in town. She certainly went for trips to London, and Greville in a letter refers to "the first time you came to G from the country." There are all sorts of conjectures as to "G's" identity, but we need hardly look further than Greville himself. Emma wrote to him as "G," and it is quite in keeping with his caution to refer to himself indirectly. The last thing he wanted was to show his hand openly, while he had reason to suppose that Emma preferred the good things of life which Fetherstonehaugh could shower upon her. He could not compete in that line, but being astute enough to realise that confidences are the keys to most girls' hearts, he gave her confidences which she incontinently betrayed, and which no doubt were part of his scheme because the betrayal did no harm. Provided he played his cards well, success was certain. Sir Harry was not in the least likely to endure, nor was Emma skilful enough to keep him. In the first place she was too young and inexperienced, and in addition she had two qualities which must needs prove fatal—fearless candour and a quick temper.

Candour and a quick temper may sit well on a wife; they

are not ornaments in a mistress. At first Fetherstonehaugh was amused at her outbursts; she was a new toy and he humoured her, perhaps liked her all the better for a spice of devilry. But by degrees caprice proved less able to allure, the humouring grew shorter, and Greville's advice was needed for patching up quarrels. At last the inevitable break came. Added to the quarrels and the weakness of sated passion came the fact that Emma was to be a mother. It was the last straw, and the young macaroni turned Emma adrift with barely enough money to reach her grandmother's home at Hawarden.

(4)

Emma failed to realise the truth. Though they had quarrelled and parted, it never occurred to her that the end had come or that she was free to choose elsewhere. Instead of using Greville's franked envelopes, she wrote again and again to Fetherstonehaugh—seven letters in all, piteous, ill-spelt scrawls—and never an answer.

Greville allowed an interval to pass, no doubt in the hope that the bitterness of desertion would drive Emma to write to him of her own accord. When she did nothing of the sort he was forced to take the first step, and as usual approached the matter sideways. He sent her a pleasant, friendly letter merely asking news of Sir Harry, hoping that she was happy, and inviting her to look him up in town. Its main object was to get a direct offer from Emma herself, and in that it nearly failed. Emma was not thinking of Greville as a protector. Her reply did include the wish, "O, G, that I was in your posesion," of which Greville made full use, but otherwise was mainly an appeal for help and advice. It ran as follows:

"(*January*, 1782.)

"My Dear Grevell,

"Yesterday did I receve your kind let^{r}. It put me in some spirits for believe me I am allmost distrackted,

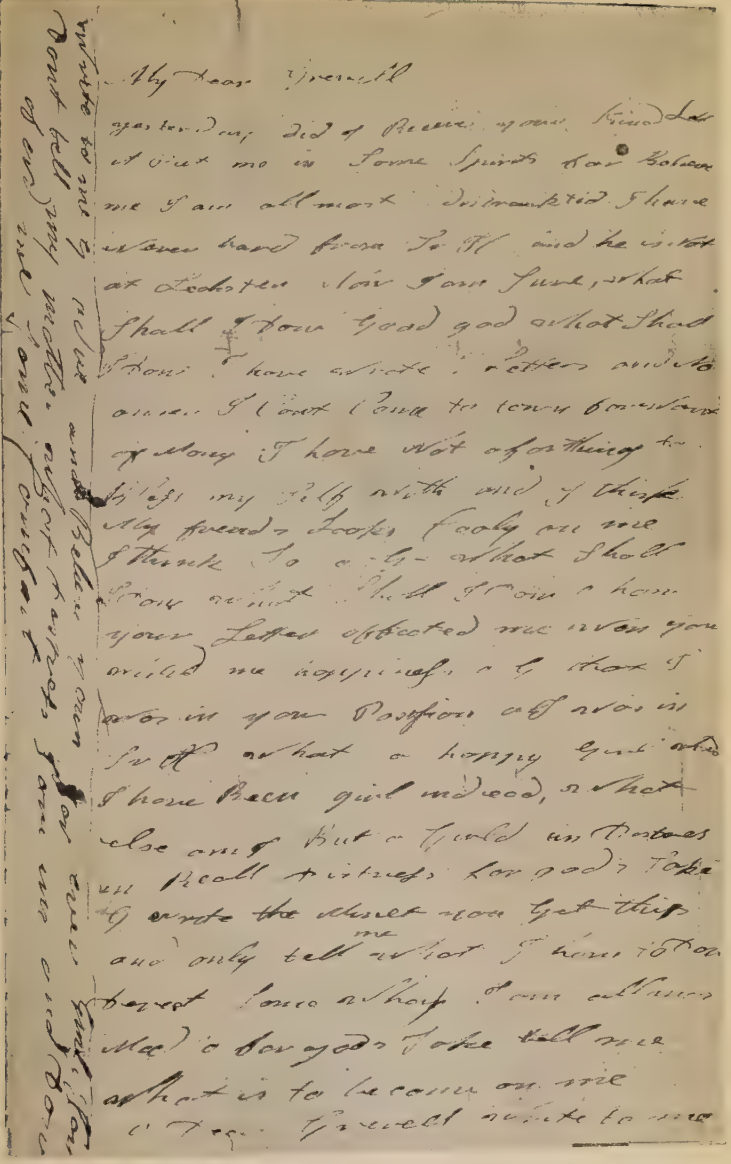
I have never hard from Sir H. and he is not at Lechster now I am sure, what shall I dow, good God what shall I dow, I have wrote 7 letters and no anser, I cant come to town for want of mony, I have not a farthing to bless myself with and I think my frends looks cooly on me, I think so. O G what shall I dow, what shall I dow. O how your letter affected me wen you wished me happiness. O G that I was in your posesion as I was in Sr. H. What a happy girl would I have been, girl indead, or what else am I but a girl in distres, in reall distres, for Gods sake G write the minet you get this and only tell me what I ham to dow, direct some whay. I am allmos mad. O for Gods sake tell me what is to become on me. O dear Grevell write to me. Write to me G. Adue and believe yours for ever

"EMLY HART"

"Dont tell my mother what distress I am in and dow aford me some comfort."

Greville, who conducted his love affairs with a business-like precision, made a note that he received this letter on the 10th of January 1782. Emma, the impetuous, had slept upon his last letter; Greville, the cautious, replied at once. There was no need for him to wait, because he had known long since exactly what he was going to say. His reply went off that same day, after a copy had been carefully made.

It took the form of a ridiculous moral lecture, in which Emma was told that while Sir Harry had behaved badly, she had deserved no better. She had been imprudent and extravagant—two cardinal sins in Greville's decalogue. However, as she now seemed quite miserable, he offered to take her under his wing, but only on one condition. "If you mean to have my protection I must *first* know from you that you are clear of every connexion, and that you will never take them again without my consent." Though he made conditions and wrote as if all was still in the air, he



EMMA'S LETTER OF JANUARY 1782

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had no intention of letting the fish slip, and therefore enclosed money, with the caution, " Do not throw it away," and gave a promise to look after the expected child. " Sir H," he wrote, " may be informed of circumstances which may reasonably make him doubt, and it is not worth while to make it a subject of altercation, its Mother shall obtain it kindness from me and it shall never want." This sentence seems to throw light on Greville's intimacy with Emma. It suggests a detailed knowledge of Emma's past history, and we may be pardoned for asking how Greville knew so much—especially if he first met Emma at Up Park. And why was Greville prepared to provide for the child without the least effort to fix the responsibility in the obvious quarter ? Greville was not a rich man to whom the expense would be a matter of indifference, nor was he fond of children. The suspicion arises that Greville knew more about the father than he ever confessed.

Be that as it may, his letter was despatched and did all he wished. It gave him Emma and upon his own terms.

CHAPTER III

THE (DIS)HONOURABLE CHARLES GREVILLE

"MR GREVILLE I take to be a man of strict honour." So Nelson delivered himself on one occasion, but rather spoilt the picture by adding the next day, "Mr G. must be a scoundrel." Nelson was in a state of woeful agitation at the time, which no doubt accounts for his diversity of opinion. But he had some justification. Greville was cursed with two fundamental stumbling-blocks, caution and conceit, a mixture which drove him in all paths of life to prefer reputation to the thing reputed.

He was the younger son of the Earl of Warwick and was born in 1749. His school-days have mercifully been forgotten, but he seems to have acquired little beyond an undue conceit of himself, and a semi-scientific interest in minerals which he probably picked up at home. Later in life he added a taste for art, which he undoubtedly borrowed from his uncle, Sir William Hamilton, and never properly digested.

On leaving school he went, in the prevailing fashion, for a tour on the Continent, which seems to have been protracted for several years. There he moved in the highest society, but found his amusements in the lowest. His diffidence in the presence of the fair sex made him, of course, a follower of Charles Hardcastle, but it haunted him even below stairs, and how he managed to have so many liaisons must remain a mystery. Whatever happened in the closet, in the drawing-room a comedy was taking place. Greville's heart was susceptible enough, but his diffidence forced him to play the part of a calm philosopher, purged

from the grosser impulses of the flesh, and interested in womankind only as a species to be dissected, classified and labelled. He had to be content with ladies such as the Viennese Princess, to whom, as he admits, " the young men pay no kind of attention," while he prides himself rather woefully on his esprit in enjoying her conversation. So we can trace him in Naples, Venice and Vienna, discussing philosophy, art and clothes in the salons, and scuttling away to his Madame Tschudis on the sly.

By 1772, however, the cares of life were beginning to show their heads above this seedy crop of wild oats. The younger son of an Earl, without title or estates, could not afford to idle or argue away his life. Something he had to do if he was to thrive, and the two normal careers for one in his position were to marry a fortune or to take up politics. Greville tried each in turn, beginning with politics.

Knowing something of Greville's flatness and the brilliance of his contemporaries—Pitt, Burke, Fox, Sheridan —we can gauge his chances of success. But he might be excused for feeling hopeful. Politics in those days were not a matter of ability, nor even a matter of votes ; they were founded on corruption and patronage. Since 1688 the government of England had been in the hands of the great Whig families, who regarded power as little more than a means of providing for themselves and their relations. Son succeeded father much as though office were a tailor's business. Posts and places were handed out, if possible on a family basis, and, if necessary, as a bribe. Half the posts were sinecures, and those that were not generally gave unlimited opportunity for speculation with public funds or frank embezzlement.

If Greville was too cautious to be either brilliant or a thorough scoundrel, at least he had plenty of high-placed relations to do some gentlemanly jobbing for him, and might naturally expect a lucrative post where the weight of his pay would make up for the lightness of his abilities.

If that failed there were always bribes to be picked up. Money was never a consideration when it came out of the Exchequer, and it was quite usual for banknotes to be pressed on the Government's supporters if they took the trouble to shake hands with the Government agents as they passed through the lobby. Parliament, in fact, was filled with " placemen, all tranquillity and smiles."

Such were the methods of Parliament when Greville first proposed to enter it. The system was successful enough to breed a company of glorious orators and immortal statesmen, which cannot be said of every system. But whatever its merits, it was calculated to confirm the great in their good opinion of themselves rather than to encourage the meek and humble. To put it briefly, the system bred the very worst form of patronage and the most despicable crew of time-servers. Whoever failed to rise to the front rank—which could be done almost in a day—tended inevitably to the ranks of the scoundrels and needy adventurers who jostled each other in the antechambers of the great and fawned revoltingly in the presence.

> "There the sycophant, and he
> Who, with bareheaded and obsequious bows,
> Begs a warm office . . . .
> The levee swarms, as if, in golden pomp,
> Were charactered on every statesman's door,
> 'Battered and bankrupt fortunes mended here.'"

Greville approximated far more toward the lower than the higher rank. Only his pride and family connections prevented him from being the sycophant pure and simple.

But even in 1773 there were symptoms of a subtle change which was to make matters far more difficult for such as Greville, and which must be noted because of the part it played, indirectly but decisively, in Emma's subsequent story. It arose out of the Wilkes controversy and the American War. Those two great movements, beating up

against the obstinacy of the King, lashed feelings to a fury and founded that spirit of partisanship which split the old family gathering into irreconcilable parties. Hitherto the Whigs had been playing a friendly game. Like the guests at the Mad Hatter's tea-party, they moved round from time to time, and in the scramble that ensued the more agile members clung tight to their emoluments, or, if they were clever, changed a sixpence for two shillings. But now party ties were beginning to be things of importance and ratting a trifle less easy. The time was not far distant when departing Ministries would no longer leave half their number in the Cabinet. Greville, in fact, had only a few years in which to trim his sails; thereafter he would have to choose between two alternatives, and if he chose wrongly, spend a decent interval in sackcloth and ashes before arraying himself in different colours.

But the change was not complete by 1773. Greville's aim at that date was simply to enter Parliament and obtain a place. He called himself a Whig as naturally as he called himself an Englishman, because there was really nothing else for him to be; and if he regarded Lord North as destined to be Prime Minister for ever, he was right at least to the extent of nine years.

Greville had a fairly reasonable income for a young man of twenty-four. He was assured of an annuity of £500 a year, which his father supplemented with an allowance of £200. Hence he was in a position to wait until he could be nominated for Warwick—a family seat—and given a post through the influence of his relations. While he was still waiting his father died, leaving him £100 to buy a ring, and of course cutting short the yearly allowance. This smack in the face distinctly choked the grief in his throat, but as he was unable to believe himself other than perfect, he spent the first few days of mourning in evolving an explanation of his father's conduct. He found it within a week. As he explained to a sympathetic uncle, the blow was

clearly due to the disinterested efforts he had made on his elder brother's behalf. If only he had given one example of these efforts nothing could have been finer, but we search in vain for the remotest reference to fact. Instead we get the interesting information, no doubt intended to come to the new earl's ears, that " I know my brother will make it up."

The new earl was apparently disposed to give his two younger brothers £5000 apiece. It is not clear if he did, though it is quite possible. What is more certain is that, on succeeding to the title, he resigned in Greville's favour a minor post which he held under Government. By July 1773 Greville was a member of Parliament, and exerting his talents at the Board of Trade. Five years later he was exactly where he had been, except that he was apparently beginning to realise that to get higher needed greater abilities or greater wickedness than he possessed. So with much burning of heart he turned his eyes from political to matrimonial advancement. By May 1778 he could write to his uncle, " Of all the châteaux I ever build none ever lasted so long as that of my wish to settle," and not only was the chateau bearing up bravely, but Greville had discovered the very chatelaine he required. In his usual way he tells his uncle that while he would never match himself with mere money, that is precisely what he hopes to do. The lady of his heart is, very conveniently, a " £20,000 prize in the lottery." The difficulty was how to screw himself up to the point of proposing. It sounds incredible that a young man of twenty-nine, especially one who prided himself on his knowledge of women, should have been so backward a lover. Yet so it was, and Greville confessed to his uncle that " I am afraid of becoming serious lest I should have a short No." The upshot of his letter is perhaps the most amazing part. After turning over all possible schemes, except the obvious one, he decides that " I must beat and beat about, and if I can find the opportunity of asking with-

out risk, you shall hear of my proceedings; but I shall be a Fabius, slow and sure."

His idea of slow and sure was to pose as a rich man, and his method of posing was to build himself a mansion in the still unfinished Portman Square, for which he borrowed the necessary capital, possibly adding whatever was left of his brother's gift of £5000. He had no qualms: at best he would impress the lady; at worst he could let or sell the house at a handsome profit.

The building began, continued and was completed, but unhappily seems to have left the lady cold. Its fate is wrapped in oblivion, though we can gather something from Greville's correspondence with his uncle. "I find," wrote Sir William towards the end of 1780, "as I imagined and foretold to yourself, that a younger brother pretending to keep house in London is certain destruction." A heap of good advice follows, which is summed up in the sentence, "If you find that your house is too expensive, get rid of it as soon as you can." This brutal statement of the obvious was too much for Greville to stomach. "I think," he retorted, "I am in an improving way," but by September of 1782 he was more subdued. "I have my house yet on my hands," he admitted, "but if I can let it, I shall." There all knowledge of the little tragedy ends.

To finish off this brief outline of Greville's early history, in October 1780 he was transferred from the Board of Trade to the Admiralty. The change does not seem to have made much difference financially, but as his new post carried with it an official residence, it must have helped to sicken Greville of the very name of house. By January 1782, after nearly nine years of office, he was still very small beer, and his matrimonial projects had so far vanished that he was ripe for settling down with Emma on a much reduced scale. He made arrangements for her to live in retirement until her confinement was over, and in the meantime secured a small house in Edgware Row, at Paddington

Green. The child, a girl, was born apparently towards the end of March 1782, and was at once sent away to Hawarden.

Finally, somewhere about her seventeenth birthday—the 26th of April 1782—Emma and her mother took up their residence at Edgware Row, where Greville joined them so soon as he had, somehow, disposed of the house in Portman Square.

CHAPTER IV

IDYLLS OF EDGWARE ROW

(1)

The stage, which had now been set for the next scene of Emma's life, had nothing to commend it. Edgware Row, for all its green, was hardly country or town; it was that soul-deadening thing, a suburb, with Tyburn for its nearest amusement. There Emma was to experience neither poverty nor riches, but the constant grind of making two ends meet. Everything around her was makeshift on one continual level of mediocrity—a peddling in art, a veneer of philosophy, a fiddling with high politics. She was to get the dregs of all the great motives in life tricked out to look like the crown.

The amazing thing is that in this stifling atmosphere Emma shone with a singularly beautiful light, rising to a splendour, both mental and moral, to which she never attained before or after. Emphatically this was the finest and sweetest period of her life. It is part of life's irony that this picture of her would have been lost but for the fame of its flamboyant travesty, too dearly bought in later years.

The material which Emma brought was not of the best. She had passed through a period of dissipation to taste at the end the bitter fruit of betrayal, likely enough to deepen the craving for excitement. What could Greville offer her? Practically nothing, and in any case he had no intention of offering it. On the contrary, he even took away from her what she had—the joys of motherhood—and did his best to stifle whatever mother's love she possessed. He

did not mean to put himself out by the least hair's breadth. Emma was not to interfere with his amusements or his duties, still less was she to share in them. She was to have no will of her own; she was to expect nothing; she was to be grateful for anything. In return for board and lodging, and the doubtful privilege of hearing Greville talk, she was to minister to his pleasures, mind his house, and provide a free cook and housekeeper in the person of her mother. Emma, in fact, was to be a mistress without the wages, and a wife without the rewards; everything for Greville, nothing for herself—not even security.

It is hardly necessary to say that Emma would have disagreed totally with this estimate of Greville, and it is worth while attempting to see him through her eyes.

Hitherto she had not valued him overmuch. She had refused to be guided by him; she had been guilty of what he variously described as "faults" and "imprudence" and "betrayal of his confidence." Even when she turned to him she was certainly thinking more of her own distresses than of his excellences. In a word, she neither loved nor hated the man; she was mainly indifferent. His letter of invitation was not calculated to make her enthusiastic. As offering some "comfort," no doubt it brought a sense of relief, and possibly a feeling of gratitude. She was too much overwhelmed to be pernickety about methods and manners. But that was all. She went to him for protection as she might have gone to anyone else; she stayed to love him as she never loved again. How, must always remain a mystery.

We see Emma entering Edgware Row a glorious wild flower with but a few petals crushed, and those half-smoothed again with the relief of pressing needs. Then after a blank of two years we find her settled in her place, a gentle clinging girl, her beauty still fresh and radiant, but softened and deepened by that touch of love which is unmistakable,

her loudness toned by an inborn grace, her wildness tamed by devotion to another. There seems to be no connection between the two pictures. Emma had done violence to every natural feeling she possessed except one, and that one was love. Because of it the extravagant tomboy counts her halfpennies, the indiscriminate lady of the town turns her back on rich offers of marriage, and the self-willed romp waits submissively for orders. We must simply admit the birth of love and wonder at its power. For there was nothing in the poor workmanship of Greville's methods to produce such a masterpiece.

(2)

The externals of her life can be very quickly described. The menage of Edgware Row is reflected in the housekeeping accounts which still exist in Emma's handwriting. They are the records of small ecomonies, simple fare and no excitements. There is no single entry for amusements, and it is quite probable that she had few, if any. Greville in later years explained that Emma was very easily satisfied ; provided she were left sufficiently alone, she would regard his mere presence at dinner as a party. There is, however, evidence that once Greville took her to Ranelagh Gardens, and the almost legendary fame of this one diversion suggests that it was unique. It seems to have taken place in the earlier days of her residence at Edgware Row, when she was no doubt more inclined to grumble at the straitness of her way of life. At any rate, to Ranelagh they went, and the story goes that when one of the singers at that eighteenth-century cabaret had finished, Emma thought she could do as well or better, and standing up in her box sang her latest song. The applause was rapturous. Naturally it would be from a crowd that was partly taken by her voice and wholly delighted at the novelty. But a " sensation " was the last thing Greville wanted ; he could neither

appreciate the publicity nor carry off the situation. Instead, he carried Emma off in a huff, and gave her a severe lecture. If we are to believe rumour, Emma was heart-broken at his scolding, and with the theatrical violence of youth, rushed upstairs, tore off her finery, and dressing in an old frock, offered to leave for ever the man she had disgraced. She herself gave a more sober version, merely stating that she attracted so much notice that she perceived it gave Greville pain, and in consequence dressed thereafter as a lady's maid and never went to a public place.

In essence both stories are the same, and come to no more than this, that Greville was recognised in the company of his mistress at a public resort. The eighteenth century had peculiar ideas on the subject of mistresses as on many others. It has often been called the age of common sense, but one may be pardoned for denying common sense to an age that cuts off its own hair in order to wear a wig. There are plenty of signs of a lack of sense, common or otherwise, and perhaps not least the attitude towards mistresses. The age was robust enough to admit their existence, and not particularly squeamish over the fact. Its downright honesty compared with the prudery of the succeeding generation is well exemplified by the fact that Mary Dickinson speaks unabashedly of "My Cousin Chas. Greville's Mistress," while Romney's son in the memoirs of his father clothes her profession in a Greek dress. But this honesty had limits, and the age which could stomach the fact was outraged by the sight. It was the audacity of the Duke of Grafton in bringing Nancy Parsons to the Opera that gave Junius his opportunity, and perhaps it was the venom of Junius's pen which sealed the order for the seclusion of mistresses. Greville summed up his own views of morality quite briefly on one occasion: "It is not the opinion of the world but my own opinion I study, therefore I am anxious that appearances may be kept up," which means, if it means anything, that he felt no com-

punction provided he kept within the accepted code of manners. Hence to be recognised in public with a mistress would have been a sore trouble to him. No wonder he never repeated the experiment, and no wonder he scolded Emma.

But if he failed to take Emma out, he was out and about himself, visiting his friends and showing himself at the gay gatherings of that very merry age. Also he had his duties, which he performed with a heavy conscientiousness. The result was that Emma had plenty of time upon her hands. The problem was how to fill it.

Greville hit on the surprising expedient of sending her to school. As her education had been almost wholly neglected, there was unlimited scope. Greville himself took in hand the more rudimentary parts. She could read and write after a fashion, but not a particularly bright fashion, and her spelling was deplorable, even for an age that disregarded spelling. It remained shaky to the end of her days, and, as it was phonetic rather than philological, and her pronunciation was what she called countrified, led to quaint mistakes. Sir William Hamilton many years later protested against her habit of "excepting" invitations. That she did not improve more is not surprising, as her master was himself much in need of Johnson's dictionary. It is a mercy she found herself unable to copy his style, for her own letters are racy and graphic, if ungrammatical, while his, without having much more in the way of grammar, are involved and tedious to a degree.

Besides reading and writing, and lectures on what Greville was pleased to call philosophy, her education included singing. Her voice was rich and powerful, though her ear was not entirely true. Greville secured a teacher who must have laid the foundations well, because subsequently, under the care of Italian masters, Emma rose sufficiently high to be offered a salary of £2000 as an opera singer.

But her accomplishments reflect more credit on Emma's natural talents than on Greville. The interesting question is why Greville undertook the task. Of course there was the necessity of finding an occupation, but that hardly accounts for the deliberate scope of his plans. He did definitely set about turning her into a lady of his own class, although the cleavage between the classes was then regarded as fundamental, and, to judge by his subsequent letters, he never expected to succeed. No doubt he had many motives, but remembering that it was not unknown for men to sell their mistresses, and remembering also Greville's habit of picking up objects of art and re-selling them, if possible at a profit, it is tempting to think that from the first he had a vague inkling of what in fact proved to be the issue—that, in a word, he intended to polish up his prize and pass it on at an enhanced value.

It is only a conjecture, and certainly is not the whole truth. Whatever end he may have had in view, he must have found amusement in the process, for Greville was a born pedagogue. He had that precise attitude of mind, self-sufficient and niggling, which goes with the natural school-marm. The lessons must have suited him down to the ground, and but for them, goodness knows how the two would have passed their evenings. The idea of Greville as a lover is laughable. Unless he imparted rules of etiquette and snatches of what the deluded Emma regarded as philosophy, they would have sat dumb—but for Emma's own prattle.

(3)

Emma had a further resource. Very shortly after her arrival at Edgware Row, Greville took her to Romney's studio to have her picture painted. It was the luckiest possible move. She became, as all the world knows, Romney's favourite model, providing him with ideas and

inspiration, and gaining in her turn occupation and a fresh outlook on life.

Romney was born in December 1734 at Beckside, near Dalton-in-Furness, and was thus some fourteen years older than Greville and thirty-one years older than Emma. Being the son of a carpenter, he had little education and no influence to help him in his career, which he found and perfected for himself. At first he practised his art in his native country, but in 1762 he set out for London, and soon made something of a name for himself. By way of finishing his artistic education he was anxious to visit Italy, and did so in March 1773, shortly before Greville entered Parliament. It is at this point that we first have definite evidence of Greville's acquaintance with him. What we learn is characteristic. Greville, a stripling of twenty-four, was amazingly condescending. He wrote to various British representatives in Italy, Lord Cowper, Sir Horace Mann, and his uncle Sir William Hamilton, instructing them to have any picture taken down which Romney might wish to copy. His intentions outran his powers; for we find Romney informing him that "they showed great readiness to serve me, but all to no purpose." Best of all, this self-assured youngster actually took upon himself to advise Romney, then nearly forty and with an established if not very eminent reputation, on the best methods of studying. It was characteristic of him, just as it was characteristic of Romney to thank him in a spirit of grateful humility. It is also characteristic that the trouble which Greville took was by no means disinterested—to use his own favourite word. Greville had commissioned Romney to pick up masterpieces on the Continent for a song, and Romney had to admit that "I am exceedingly concerned that I have not hitherto had it in my power . . . to procure such pieces as you wish to have."

By the end of 1775 Romney was back in London and established in Cavendish Square. In a very short while

the fashionable world had discovered him, and was flocking to his studio, in preference even to Sir Joshua Reynolds. Greville, we may assume, continued his acquaintance with the greater reliance. At this time he was more or less seriously engaged in his rôle of art dealer.

When in 1782 Greville took Emma to Romney he ordered a "three-quarters" portrait—that being the cheapest, and the result was one of the best known of Emma's pictures, the one in which she is represented with a little spaniel lapdog under her arm. Apparently Greville gave or more probably sold it to his uncle, for it figured in the sale of Sir William's collection.

The girl and the artist lost no time in discovering their interest in each other. Romney painted portraits somewhat against his will and solely for bread and butter; his ambitions lay in the direction of fancy pictures. In Emma he found a perfect model who could express each feeling and emotion at will. Apparently he discovered her talent from the first, for no sooner had he finished the portrait Greville had ordered than he began another, perhaps the finest of all the Emma pictures—the Circe. Thereafter he painted her in every conceivable attitude and as every imaginable character. She spent hours at his studio, and there grew up a very genuine attachment between them.

They had much in common. Coming from the same quarter of England, they were both children of the people, with all the strength of the soil combined, even in Emma's case, with something of genius; both were fond of colour and light; both, though in different ways, were dramatic artists. They were mutually complementary. Emma came to regard him as a father, to whom she could pour out her little troubles with the certainty of sympathy and understanding, and with whom she could wile away the hours of loneliness and tedium. Romney, whose mind was unhinged with genius and insanity, and who shunned the society of the great, felt not only at ease with her, but also

inspired to greater efforts, until at last, as his diseases grew upon him, he looked upon her with a superstitious reverence as something more than human—a divine lady sent to lighten the slough of misery and despair into which his mind was sinking.

This alliance of genius with beauty did more than salve the wounds of a sick soul. Emma's visits to Cavendish Square laid the foundations of her Attitudes. She was perfectly well aware of her own beauty and had a naïve enjoyment in hearing herself praised. She learnt from Romney a store of wisdom in the art of showing herself off to the best advantage, and a catalogue of the emotions best suited to statuesque display. How cleverly she afterwards employed this knowledge will appear in due course.

To descend from the sublime to the ridiculous, Emma's pictures had a bearing on the trend of fashion. Emma was born at a time when fashions were approaching the most fantastic of extremes. When she died they had reached an almost equal extreme in the opposite direction. The ladies of Emma's youth wore head-dresses of anything up to three feet in height and stiff, long-waisted stays. Romney always preferred nature and truth; he allowed Emma's hair to fall free, and clothed her in simple drapery, after the manner of ancient Greece. His picture of her as Cassandra in the Shakespeare Gallery had a direct influence on public taste, and no doubt the other pictures, so far as they were seen, had a similar effect. At all events the fashions veered round; head-dresses disappeared, and lacing and hoops gave place to the deshabille of the Empire.

In the four years that Emma was at Edgware Row she gave Romney no fewer than three hundred sittings. The last picture of this period was of her as a Spinstress. Greville seems to have taken a fancy to it, but found his financial resources unequal to the cost. The canvas remained in Romney's studio till 1788, when a Mr Christian Curwen saw, admired and offered to buy it. Romney, with his usual

delicacy of feeling, did not feel at liberty to sell without first consulting Greville, whose reply was the habitual farrago of "philosophy" and bunkum. "There are circumstances," he assured Romney, "which force the natural bias of character and render it prudent to change the scene of action to train them to necessary sacrifices. The separation from the original of the Spinstress has not been indifferent to me, and I am but just reconciled to it, from knowing that the beneficial consequences of acquirements will be obtained, and that the aberration from the plan I intended will be for her benefit. I therefore can have no reason to value the Spinstress less than I have done, on the contrary the just estimation of its merits is ascertained by the offer from a person who does not know the original; yet I find myself daily so much poorer, that I do not foresee when I can pay for it, and I am already too much obliged to you to avail myself in any degree of your kindness to me:—perhaps Mr Christian might accept my resignation of it and pay for it, and give me the option of repurchasing if the improbable event of my increase of means shall enable me to recover what I now lose with regret." That is not the end of the sentence, and the only justification for inserting it is to give a specimen of Greville's style.

To conclude this tedious matter, Mr Curwen agreed to Greville's plan on condition that if he lost the Spinstress Romney should sell him another picture in its place. Greville wrote complaisantly to Romney that he had "multiplied the objects of expectation from better times by keeping hold of the Spinstress without postponing the payment," a novel form of self-congratulation.

CHAPTER V

POLITICS AND "PHILOSOPHY"

(1)

Greville and Emma might have lived happily if Fate had been content to leave them alone; but Fate had other games to play—a series of tragedies, look at them how we like.

Emma came to Greville in January 1782. She could hardly have chosen a worse time, though it would have been good enough if Greville had been anything but a politician of no ability, steering an insignificant skiff in waters that were much more troubled than he thought. Before Emma entered Edgware Row, while in fact she was in the pangs of child-birth, Greville found himself in the midst of a political tornado, which completely altered the situation.

For the last twelve years Lord North had been Prime Minister, and, true to his convictions, had been the complaisant henchman of the King. Under his good-humoured and not unskilful handling of Parliament, George III. had been able to realise his ambition; he had been "a King," and the bitter fruits of his statesmanship were ripe to falling. In those twelve years the loyalty of the American colonies had been turned to revolution, and in the war that followed, somehow France, Spain and Holland had been added to the number of England's enemies. Everything had gone wrong, and gone on going wrong. In the previous November news of the British surrender at Yorktown had forced out of Lord North the despairing cry, "O God, it is all over!" He would have resigned, but that the indomitable

King compelled him to retain office and continue the struggle. It was the only thing he could retain, and while he held on with slackening fingers the Spaniards captured Minorca and the French fleet swept up the West Indian Islands. The end came dramatically. For some months the opposition had been tabling one motion of censure after another, but he had beaten them all off, and if he could beat off one more, on the 20th of March, he would have breathing space during the recess. On that 20th of March the House was crowded and impatient to get to grips, but nothing could be done owing to the unaccountable absence of the Prime Minister, who, in fact, was closeted with the King. Suddenly he entered the buzzing chamber in full dress, his ribbons and stars ablaze on his breast, and proceeded to his seat amid a babel of shouts and cat-calls. There he attempted to address the Chair, but as Lord Surrey, the mover of the motion, was on his feet, a fresh clamour arose, and for a time he was unable to make himself heard. When some sort of quiet had been obtained, he briefly moved the adjournment on the ground that the King had decided to change the Ministry. The effect of his few words was electrical. The opposition were vociferous with joy, while the supporters of the Government were dumb with surprise and dismay.

Greville was faced with a dilemma and had to make up his mind at once. Should he cling to Lord North in the hope of returning to power when that statesman came back, or should he make what terms he could with the masters of the field ? He decided to go out with North.

On the whole his choice was wise. North had not actually been defeated and there was reason to suppose that he still had a majority. The only cause of his fall was the question of the American War ; he could have remained in office if he had been able to end the struggle ; he would probably return as soon as peace was concluded. This probability arose not only from his prestige and personal

popularity, but from the nature of the opposition, whose leaders (Rockingham, Shelburne, and Fox) were at loggerheads with one another and personally distasteful to the King. He might abide them for the moment, but once they had fulfilled their purpose he was not likely to keep them, even supposing their own internal quarrels had not already brought them to defeat. For over twenty years the King had made and unmade ministries as he chose, and if he had been quiet for the last twelve, it was only because he had perfected his system from top to bottom, and had no inconvenient ministers who needed removal. It took more than Greville to see that this machine of autocracy was wearing out, and that the popular discontents meant a weariness of something more than the American War. To Greville it might well have seemed impossible that the "King's friends" would be in the wilderness for years on end—in fact, for ever.

He resigned; but the resignation was a blow to his finances, throwing him back on his bare annuity of £500 a year just at the moment when he had incurred the expense of Emma and her unborn child, and had two houses on his hands—the white elephant of Portman Square and the new residence of Edgware Row. The blow was so sudden and overwhelming that it made him sick—literally as well as metaphorically. "I hope," writes his uncle, "before this time that your health, which is the essential point, is perfectly re-established, and as to employment, I daresay it will not be long before you contrive to get in again. In the meantime, to be sure, you must retrench as much as possible." Greville was to grow tired of that word "retrench" before he had finished.

Meanwhile the best contrivance for getting in again was to help forward the negotiations for peace. The new Government under the Marquis of Rockingham opened auspiciously. Negotiations for peace on the basis of American Independence began, and were pushed a large

step forward by Rodney's victory over the French on the 12th of April.

Two days before Rodney's victory, the *Albemarle*, frigate of twenty-eight guns, under the command of a certain Captain Horatio Nelson, set sail with a convoy of thirty odd vessels for North America. She reached Quebec on the 1st July, and amused herself for the next few months snapping up enemy ships in the neighbourhood of Boston Bay and Cape Cod. In September of the same year she returned to Quebec, where the captain, just twenty-four years of age, fell desperately in love with a Canadian girl. Admiralty orders, which are apt to overlook the state of young officers' hearts, decided that the *Albemarle* should sail for New York. Captain Nelson bade farewell to his charmer and was on board ready to sail the next day, when he was seized by a sudden wild desire to throw fame and career to the winds and sacrifice all for a pretty face. He allowed the desire to gain the upper hand, and was found by a party of his shipmates deserting the ship and returning to the lady's house. As their arguments had no effect on the turbulence of his feelings, like sensible fellows they had recourse to more forcible methods. Nelson was dragged back to the sea willy-nilly, and was wise enough to accept the inevitable. But the fact remains that if they had not intervened, Trafalgar would never have been fought or won, and Emma would never have made a picture in history. A memorable year 1782!

Meanwhile, to return to matters nearer home, the very day that the *Albemarle* reached Quebec Rockingham died, leaving the peace negotiations half-fledged. In the re-shuffle which was bound to follow, Greville had another chance of changing his mind, and apparently thought about it. "I do not like," he wrote in September, "to join precipitately any set; the meeting of Parliament will decide on principles, and the ballance is in the hand of the former set." Although confessing that he did not know

what to do, he could not help giving himself a pat on the back. "I fear," he says, "you would not approve of my conduct since out of office. I know it is not the most suited to preferment, but I have sufficient of the world to hold myself as high with a reduced as with a more ample income; and I have reduced my luxuries with as much ease as I took them up." By which he means that Emma had broken his fall, and might be considered a fair exchange for the uneasy grandeur of Portman Square.

However, his shilly-shallying was wiser than himself. It would have been the height of folly to join the Government at the death of Rockingham, who had been the moderating influence, and the one bond of union between the jarring elements of his party. When he was out of the way, Shelburne became Prime Minister, and Shelburne had a habit of making enemies as other men shell peas—without the least difficulty and apparently without thought. The prospects of so temperamental a leader were none of the brightest, and were made no brighter by the fact that he quarrelled at once with his colleagues.

Amongst others, he quarrelled with Charles James Fox, which was an uncommonly silly thing to do, because Fox, besides being a brilliant Parliamentarian, was one of the best-loved men of the day, representing in his own person all the enthusiasm and popularity which Shelburne so conspicuously lacked. Fox resigned in disgust and took over to the opposition a number of Rockingham's old followers. More than that, he made overtures to Lord North, and finally entered into a coalition with him, which proved far too strong for the Government. Shelburne, for all that he managed to sign the preliminaries of peace with America, France and Spain, fell on the 24th of February 1783.

There followed the Coalition Government, and Greville, as a virtuous adherent of Lord North, looked naturally for his reward. It came in the shape of his appointment to be

Treasurer of the Household. His banishment from office had lasted barely twelve months—a nuisance, but not a crushing defeat. He had pulled through with Emma in tow, and lost nothing except the house in Portman Square, which he had made up his mind to leave before the turmoil started. It must have been a relief to him, and, one may hope, to Emma also—though the hope is rather forlorn. Greville could fling away money on what he regarded as sound speculations and invest savings in minerals, but the pampering of Emma was not among his extravagances. As it happens, he was wise to continue his policy of paring Emma's cheese, because he had made the mistake of his life, a mistake which was to cost him ten years of office and set Emma on the road to notoriety and ruin. Before the year was out he was to need every penny he had saved.

Yet he could hardly be blamed. Rarely has any Ministry contained so large a number of men of genius, not to mention the cream of the mere parliamentarians. Besides, Greville had a brother-in-law in the Cabinet, Lord Stormont, and might therefore expect the advantages of family influence. It was true the King hated Fox and was furious with Lord North, but the tantrums of the King seemed powerless against the absolute lack of any other alternative. It was also true that public opinion was shocked at the Coalition, but neither Greville, nor the conspirators themselves, nor yet the King, nor even the public, were in the least aware what strides had been made in the direction of democracy, and how potent public opinion was to prove itself. To Greville the outstanding fact was that only one member of any importance in the House was on the opposition benches, and that a mere stripling of twenty-four—one William Pitt. It would have surprised Greville to think that this boy, for all his brilliance, was a more far-sighted and no less ambitious schemer than himself, with the added insult of being right.

This is not the place to enter into the history of the

Coalition. It lasted till the 18th of December, when it was ignominiously kicked out by the King himself, and William Pitt appointed Prime Minister.

Once again Greville had to choose, and this time there was less hesitation. In the first place, the influence of party had grown much stronger, and no doubt had weight with Greville. But there were other reasons as well. The Coalition were more amused than hurt at their dismissal. To them the new Ministry, led by a boy and containing a weird assortment of mediocrity, seemed to be nothing but a harlequinade, something to wile away an idle hour until the King's outburst had simmered down and the real masters of Parliament were restored to office. Greville was in the gayest of humours, and light-heartedly rushed forward among the first to lay down his badge of office. The King, if we are to believe Greville's subsequent statements, was extremely gentle with him, and, knowing his own grim obstinacy, gave him every opportunity of withdrawing before it was too late. "I have heard Mr Greville, whom I very particularly knew," says Wraxall, "often say that the King most kindly expostulated with him when he entered the closet to lay down his place, and urged him by no means to commit an act so unnecessary; the Treasurership of the Household being, not a Ministerial, but a personal situation in the family of the Sovereign. I ought to add," Wraxall continues, "that Fox, who well knew Mr Greville's private embarassments, had, with a liberality of mind truly noble, exhorted him to retain his post; absolving him at the same time from all considerations of a political kind." Fox's liberality of mind was certainly noble, for Greville had failed him at his direst need. A letter, or a copy of it, still exists in which, less than a month earlier, he told Fox that he would not vote for him, wrapping the refusal up, of course, in the finest of language and sentiments.

The fact is that Greville hoped to follow his own

precedent, and return to a higher paid post in a year or so when the struggling new Ministry had fallen into just contempt for "the weakness or ignorance which may attend the measures of administration."

(2)

Greville's parliamentary disasters gave him plenty of leisure, which he used in forming Emma. For some obscure reason he decided to mould her on his conception of himself, or, in other words, to turn her into a "philosopher." The extraordinary thing is that he succeeded. Barely two years after her arrival at Edgware Row Emma wrote, "Would you think it, Greville—Emma—the wild unthinking Emma is a grave thoughtful phylosopher."

Judging by her letters, Greville's philosophy consisted mainly of copy-book maxims. "I have one happiness in vew," writes Emma, "which I am determined to practice, & that is eveness of temper & steadyness of mind, for endead I have thought so much of your aimable goodness when you have been tried to the utmost that I will, endead I will, manege myself & try to be like Greville—endead I never can be like him. But I will do all I can towards it, & I am sure you will not desire more." "There is nothing like bying expearance, I may be happyer for it hearafter & I will think of the time coming & not the time past, except to make comparrasons to show what allterations there is for the best."

The aim and object of the maxims appear to have been the total suppression of all Emma's thoughts and wishes and a complete subordination to Greville. If she can achieve this, she will become a paragon among women. "Did you but know," writes Emma with a pathetically faithful reproduction of Greville's teaching, "when I do think, what thoughts—what tender thoughts, you would say, Good God & can Emma have such feiling senceibility—

PADDINGTON GREEN (NEAR EDGWARE ROW)

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no; I never could think it, but now I hope to bring her to conviction, & she may now prove a valluable & amable whoman—true, Greville, & you shall not be disapointed."

Such was the "philosophy," and the text-book was a deplorable work of William Hayley's, *The Triumphs of Temper. A Poem in Six Cantos.* Throughout the whole six an insufferable heroine, by name Serena, moves from one so-called temptation to the next, triumphing over them all by an unequalled exhibition of priggishness. Emma accepted the example with implicit faith in its merits. To reduce the matter to its simplest form, Emma had not lived very long with Greville before she fell completely in love with him, and, following the normal course where love is unrestrained by reason, regarded him as perfect and his words as oracles.

How long it took before this very desirable consummation was reached we do not know. Nor does it matter. The point is that Emma had yielded herself completely to Greville's domination when the next figure in the drama appeared upon the stage. This was Sir William Hamilton, the uncle of whom Greville had so often spoken.

At this threshold of Emma's greatness it may be well to take a bird's-eye view of past and future. After her obscure beginnings there were four men who entered into her life and influenced it profoundly. The first was Fetherstonehaugh, who stands by himself, a sort of prelude to the succeeding play. There was no tie between him and Emma; they had nothing in common. He regarded her as an incident in a gay life, and in later years looked back upon the episode without shame or repentance. Emma also looked back upon those times with indifference. In after years the two corresponded, and perhaps met, as old and innocent friends. Yet to him she owed her first taste of luxury and her first taste of despair. These two extremes are woven through her whole life, like the motifs of a symphony, and it was fitting that the notes should be

struck from the first. To Fetherstonehaugh she also owed the pangs and pleasures of first motherhood. She was twice a mother, by different men; and the fathers of her children were the two men for whom she had the least depth of feeling. With both of them she was mainly centred in herself, and the fate which twisted all her course awry picked on them alone to rouse in her the most self-effacing of sentiments.

The three who followed Fetherstonehaugh had larger parts to play. They stand in an ascending scale of character, power and genius; each greater than the last, and each exercising an influence wholly unlike his predecessor's. Emma's sway grew with their greatness. The first liked her; the second loved; the third adored. And curiously, as she mounted higher in their hearts, her own response was shallower, though more showy. To the first she gave her love; for the second she learned a very real affection based on gratitude; the third attracted nothing but the excited passion of vainglory.

Emma was no butterfly, nor yet an adventuress. If she had it in her to climb, she was also void of all fickleness. In a degree given to few others she had the capacity of following St Paul's maxim, "In whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." She could make the best of anything, and in all probability even Fetherstonehaugh could have held her to the end. But she was merged in one man after the other, without her will or knowledge, pushed on by a force that was external, or swept on by a chance that was unpremeditated—the sport of men and fortune. There was no break between Fetherstonehaugh and Greville, except in her knowledge of events. Greville was waiting to take her up before Fetherstonehaugh had thrown her off. In just such a fashion she was now to be passed on again from Greville to his uncle without a hitch and without her consent. Looking at facts dispassionately, it may almost be said that the stars in their courses fought against her. A

girl may battle with whims and preferences; she is powerless against the course of events. A girl may overcome temptations, but she is unarmed against the schemes of those she loves and trusts. Both events and schemes were working against her from the very year in which she came to Edgware Row. The tricks of politics have been described, and a brief outline of Sir William's life will make the facts still clearer.

CHAPTER VI

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

(1)

The Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, K.C.B., was many cuts above his nephew, but in no sense great; at most he was distinguished. All mere distinction tends to disappear after death, but Sir William had the mortification of himself outliving his distinction. His posthumous fame depends entirely upon Emma—a thought he would have found it difficult to relish. During his lifetime his reputation rested partly on the fact that he was the King's foster-brother, and partly on a very real charm of manner. He was the best type of English gentleman, courteous, affable, amusing, with the inevitable crop of foibles and prejudices.

He was born in 1730, and was thus thirty-five years older than Emma. When he was seventeen he obtained a commission in the 3rd regiment of Foot Guards, saw active service, and in 1758 resigned out of pique because he was passed over for promotion. In the same year he married Miss Catherine Barlow, a Welsh heiress, for her money. Later in life he was honest enough to admit that he had married her "something against his inclination." However, he behaved reasonably well towards her, and was rewarded with a deep and certainly undeserved devotion. The immediate result was that, backed by her money and estates, he entered Parliament, representing Midhurst from 1761 to 1764, a seat in which four years later he was followed by Charles James Fox. In 1764 he was appointed Envoy to the Court of Naples. Diplomatically it was a post of

no importance. Great Britain's interests lay in India, America, and Northern Europe. This offshoot of the Italian peninsula was the battle-ground of Austria and Spain; it did not affect England. But it suited Hamilton down to the ground. He was fond of art and dabbled in science. In the former capacity he collected pictures, vases, and cameos, and found a vent for his speculative ingenuity in prowling about the excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii, picking up antiques which he hoped would prove valuable. On the whole he was clever at the job, though his antiquarian knowledge was small. In the latter capacity he wrote observations on Vesuvius and other volcanic mountains, making a respectable name, in spite of some passages of unconscious humour.

During one eruption he was examining the lava with a peasant guide when the earth began to quake and a volley of pumice-stone fell around them. "My guide, alarmed," writes Sir William, "took to his heels; and I must confess that I was not at my ease. I followed close, and we ran near three miles without stopping." This headlong method of "not being at his ease" was partly the result of his apprehensions, and partly because "the pumice-stones falling upon us like hail, were of such a size as to cause a disagreable sensation upon the part where they fell." The first three miles puffed him, but "after having taken breath, as the earth still trembled greatly, I thought it most prudent to leave the mountain, and return to my villa." In the afternoon "the noise and smell of sulphur increasing, we removed from our villa to Naples." Here his retreat ended, though not his alarm. However, fortunately the Neapolitan mob was as terrified as himself, and "obliged the Cardinal to bring out the head of Saint Januarius, and go with it in procession to the Ponte Maddalena, at the extremity of Naples towards Vesuvius; and it is well attested here that the eruption ceased the moment the Saint came in sight of the mountain." With this timely

intervention of the holy relics, Sir William was able to continue his observations, and in due course obtained the honour of becoming a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Besides his various hobbies of a semi-scientific or antiquarian nature, Sir William was fond of music and a keen sportsman. His wife was an accomplished performer on the harpsichord, and if we are to believe Fanny Burney, Sir William not only appreciated, but occasionally played himself. As to his more vigorous pursuits, Wraxall states that "he would pass whole days, and almost weeks, with the King of Naples, either hunting or shooting in the royal woods; or more laboriously engaged in an open boat, exposed to the rays of a burning sun, harpooning fish in the bay of Castellamare." We know from his own correspondence that he attended the shooting parties of the King of Naples and did fair execution, but he does not seem to have found too much pleasure in it, being liable to fits of indigestion from the rough living. Fishing appealed to him. It was one of his foibles to pose as a strong man, which he may well have been in his youth; but the pose became more difficult as the years advanced, and led him as an elderly man to cut undignified capers.

These numerous interests and pursuits proved him to be an all-round man, and would have been creditable enough if he had combined with them any ability in his duties. But duties he either had not got or failed to find. Yet it was in the last resort as a diplomatist and man of action that he was found wanting, because the French Revolution flung an almost impossible task on him in his old age, when his talents would naturally have been rusty, and were in addition atrophied from want of use.

In the earlier, light-hearted years he seems to have regarded himself more as a companion to the Neapolitan Royal Family than an Ambassador. His first wife gives an account of their manner of life which aptly sums up the situation. "Sir William pays his court, and keeps his

health by the great and almost constant exercise he uses, for he seldom misses going out shooting with the King when His Majesty thinks the sport will be good, which is usually three or four times a week. They set out at break of day, dine in the field, and he comes home just to drink tea, when he returns again to the Palace where he plays at a game called Biribis with the King and Queen, they afterwards sup, and he is home a little after 9 o'clock; this kind of footing is a curious one for the King of England's Minister to one of the Bourbon family, and what makes it still more particular is that the French and Spanish Ministers come but once a week in a formal way, and usually come together, as if to keep one another in countenance." Elsewhere she writes, "in the evening we have musick, afterwards I work and Sir William reads to me, and you cannot think with what pleasure I heard him tell an Italian the other day, who wondered at our not going to the Conversationes a mile off, that our evenings passed so pleasantly that he could not have the heart to try a change."

Poor, devoted woman! She deserved more than the lazy evenings of an over-exercised husband, for added to her money and her love, her letters show that she had considerable insight into men and matters and a pleasant sense of humour. All she lacked was looks and health.

However, this was the heyday of Hamilton's fortunes. Life was pleasant and easy, and the derelictions of duty not serious. They might have been, but the King, who was equally lazy and easy-going, saw to it that they were not by passing on to Hamilton of his own accord any piece of interesting information. One instance in particular is worth noting for the light it throws on a much-debated event in Emma's life to be recorded later. In June 1779 the King received a confidential letter from his father, Charles III. of Spain, in which the Spanish King said he was thinking of joining with France in the war against Great Britain. The King of Naples simply handed the

letter over to Hamilton, who passed the news on to Lord North.

But to return to his private affairs. His wife suffered from bad health, a fact which he endured with such patience as he could. On one occasion she was laid up at Spital with a feverish cold. "I was obliged," Sir William wrote with feeling recollection of his discomfort, "with the assistance of Monsieur Tissot's book to undertake her cure, which I completed in five days; luckily there was a lake close by, and I amused myself with catching pike."

She died in August 1782, after twenty-four years of married life, and left a touching record of her feelings. "I feel my weak, tottering frame sinking, and my spirits fail me, my only regret in leaving this world is the leaving you, was it not for that I should wish the struggle over; but my heart is so wrapped in you, that you are like the soul that animates my body. . . . God grant . . . that we may meet in a better world than this—my lips, my heart, my soul blesses you and prays for you, dearest of earthly beings . . . remember your promise of being laid by me when God calls you away . . . forget my failings, and cherish the memory of a wife who has loved you beyond the love of woman and dies yours most faithfully."

The blank she left was rather more than could be filled by pike, especially as their only child had died some years before. Sir William, for all that he had married something against his inclination and never for a moment entered into his wife's spiritual sphere, had a true, though unemotional, appreciation of her qualities. To part after twenty-four years must necessarily be a wrench, and death has a knack of colouring the virtues of the departed. But the pain, if sharp, is apt to be transient, the more so when the feelings it harrows are not deep seated. Sir William's grief soon became merged in a dull melancholy at the want of companionship, and barely two months later he was writing to his favourite niece of his shooting expeditions with the

King. "The air and exercise keep up my health and spirits which would infallibly suffer was I to stay much at home which is no longer comfortable to me. . . . Should the peace take place as I hope, I mean to ask the King's leave to return home for a short time to settle some affairs of real consequence to me." The affairs of real consequence were the spoils of marriage—his late wife's estate; and the two epithets "comfortable" and "real" are symptomatic.

Peace did take place, and by August 1783 he was in London. He returned to Naples in September 1784. Dates are annoying things, but on this occasion must be noted. Sir William's wife died in the very year that Emma came to Edgware Row. If he had been able to return to England at once, his leave would have coincided with Greville's tenure of the Treasurership of the Household, and he would have returned to Naples possibly with another wife, and possibly without, but almost certainly without thoughts of Emma. As it was, Fate adjusted all the threads of the drama with a very pretty regard to dates.

(2)

Sir William was fond of his nephews and nieces. The two favourites were Mary Hamilton and Charles Greville, and they were among the first that he would have visited on his arrival in England. We can therefore safely assume that he first saw Emma in the late summer of 1783. He had probably heard of her already, for Greville's mistress was known to all the family by repute, and known to some of the men personally.

Sir William was now fifty-four, and young for his age. It was just a year since his wife had died—long enough to blur the memory of one for whom his affection had never been deep, and far too long to prove the discomforts of widowerhood. He was also a connoisseur of art. From

all points of view he was likely to look at Emma with interest. At the outset he was busy with other concerns; there was the settling of his affairs, and there was the sale of some of his antiques—both highly necessary for a man of fairly moderate means who was accustomed to do himself well and found himself some £4000 in debt. These business affairs occupied most of the remaining months of 1783, incidentally taking him down to Bulstrode to negotiate the sale of the vase, afterwards known by the name of its purchaser, the Duchess of Portland.

Towards the end of the year, however, we can trace a certain reluctance on his part to leave London, a reluctance which is generally coupled somehow or another with Greville's name. "I was coming to you," he writes in November, "every moment of the two days before you left Town and I was always prevented—Charles Greville has received your note." And again in December, "Saturday we [*i.e.* Greville and himself] had fixed for paying our respects to the Duchess—but it is now impossible for me to absent myself from Town." So important had it become for him to be in London that in January 1784 he handed over to Mary Hamilton the whole business of selling his vase, which Mary concluded with commendable despatch. It is difficult to believe that his presence in London was demanded by anything more pressing or less exciting than Emma herself, for two reasons, the first being the course of subsequent events.

The second reason requires a little more explanation. Among other irons which Greville had in his financial fire was the hope of becoming his uncle's heir. It was a mere hope, but not unreasonable. Hamilton would have to leave the Welsh estate to some one, and as he was unfettered by any settlement or children, a nephew was the most obvious choice. Of all the nephews Greville had the best reason for regarding himself as the favourite. But Sir William was by no means too old for a second marriage and a brood

of children. He had always had a soft corner in his heart for the ladies, as Greville had the best of evidence for believing. In Naples he was beyond Greville's control, but also much further removed from temptation. There were ladies and to spare of easy virtue, but not many English girls to marry, and Sir William could be trusted—or so Greville thought—not to contract a marriage which Society would condemn. It was during his leave that the position was ticklish. Sir William, with a title, an estate, royal favour, and the status of an Ambassador, was a distinctly eligible *parti*.

Greville therefore decided that his uncle must be kept out of harm's way, and he chose Emma as his instrument. The scheme was matured probably before Sir William's return, certainly soon after, and full instructions given to Emma to flirt with the elderly gentleman and keep his attention occupied. Emma quite understood the part she had to play: "Give my dear kind love and compliments," she wrote in June 1784, "to Pliney [Sir William] and tell him I put you under his care and he must be answerable for you to me wen I see him. I hope he has not fell in love with any raw-boned Scotch whoman whose fortune would make up for the want of Beauty and then he may soon through her in a decline—Mum—for he is fond of portraits in that whay and then he must be fond of orraiginals and it will answer every purpose. But dont put him in mind of it, for fear." With Emma throwing herself at his head, and infallibly hitting his heart, the attraction of London is explained.

All this scheming and flirting might have ended in smoke but for the death of the Coalition. At the outset, and indeed to the end, Emma was posing before Sir William as she was accustomed to pose before Romney. Her actions were make-belief, carried through with all the greater verve because she was acting out of her own deep love for Greville. It was sheer joy to live and die for

him ; it was the finest of games to hazard hearts for his advancement.

But the further frustration of his political hopes put other ideas into Greville's head. What had begun as a more or less pardonable game took on a more villainous aspect. Exactly when the darker development began there is no possibility of knowing, but we are safe in saying not before the end of 1783. The main factor was that Greville, thrown back once more on his annuity and in debt as well, had to look more closely at his prospects. Politics had not made his fortune, and the outlook, if not wholly black, was at least unsettled. For Greville the prime necessity, as he whined to his uncle a little later, was a strong Government, something guaranteed to wear. He could not cope with this constant rise and fall, and so must needs look for another avenue to peace and plenty.

There were two open to him : one was the long road to his uncle's estates, and the other was the path to matrimony, short, but, as Greville had already experienced, extraordinarily steep. Marriages of convenience were common enough, but the convenience was usually mutual, or pretended to be. Greville had none to offer, and no fiery passion to make up for it. He urgently needed either an infusion of spunk or some semblance of "convenience" to play as a trump card.

As time went on Greville began to see that both roads to wealth passed through his uncle's body. If he could make certain of inheriting the Welsh estates, that mortgage of the future would pass very well as a credential for marriage. To make it certain, Sir William must proclaim him his heir, and must never marry again.

From this point to the maturing of the scheme was a very short step. Briefly, Greville proposed to sell Emma to his uncle, the price being the payment of his immediate debts and a testamentary promise. She was to continue her fascination in Naples as well as England. His uncle

was growing older than he suspected, and an old man's darling has a more permanent place than a young man's fancy. Sir William would be constant and content, and best of all, he could not conceivably marry a blacksmith's daughter.

The plan matured slowly. There were many things to be considered. First there were Greville's own feelings. Certainly he was never infatuated; if he had been, he would never have written to Emma at the outset as he did. Yet if he took her cautiously and with conditions, it was because she attracted him. She did—to the full extent of his capacity, but his capacity was small. Just in proportion as a passion is violent its course is short. Fetherstonehaugh's lasted a matter of six months. Greville, feeling less keenly, might be expected to endure longer, and as his passion had never fired his blood, it would take him as long to realise the end of his adventure as its conception. By the end of 1783 he had lived with Emma twenty months, and was probably growing weary of her without realising it. His feelings would have been weak enough to let self-interest form the plan, and perhaps strong enough to produce a vague regret, and require some sort of encouragement. This he received from Sir William, whose mere pleasure in Emma's company was giving place to marked attentions. As early as April 1784, the two were a subject of gossip. Mary Hamilton records with a touch of malicious glee, how "Miss Palmer told me that my uncle William had been often at Sir J. Reynolds lately; that he escorted my Cousin Chas. Greville's Mistress in a hackney coach, and that her uncle [Sir Joshua] was painting this woman's picture for him to take to Naples. I shall make use of this intelligence to have some entertainment in plaguing Sir William." The plaguing, no doubt, took place, for Sir William began to fancy signs of jealousy in Greville, and Greville observed his uncle's uneasy conscience.

As time went on he wanted to believe that she really

cared for Sir William, and persuaded himself sufficiently, though not with a very good grace. Emma, after all, belonged to him, body and soul, and he not only knew the fact, but rather prided himself on it. She was his one complete conquest, and it is hard to give up the laurels of victory, even if one does it voluntarily, to obtain a better crown.

But what he forced himself to believe must not be taken for the fact. Emma was eighteen when Sir William arrived in England, and naturally knew that he was Greville's uncle. To any girl of eighteen an unknown uncle is *ipso facto* an old man. Her instinctive feelings towards him were those of a daughter or niece. Then, too, she had been coached to regard Greville as his heir, another bar to any idea of equality of age. Sir William from all points of view belonged to an older generation, and girls of eighteen are not naturally disposed to fall in love with old fogies.

In actual fact she found him very charming—an "old dear," with whom she could feel entirely at her ease. He was a polished man of the world, fond of female society, handsome and well-preserved, with an easy-going temperament and a turn for light conversation seasoned with wit. He was very capable of winning the affection of young girls. Certainly he won Emma's. Not that she appreciated to the full the more delicate shades of his character, but what she lacked in appreciation she made up in admiration. In 1783 a fine gentleman was everything, and Emma was overcome by his condescension and kindliness. The playful little messages which she sent him in her letters to Greville may have been partly inspired to keep Sir William's sentiment green, but there is a touch of genuine feeling about them. Emma had been coached to flirt, but she added to coquetry a real affection which had nothing of sex about it. She liked him, but it went no further. That, however, was enough for Greville's purpose. He could build a whole tower of cards on that liking, and paint it to look like stone.

So the whole scheme fitted in—his own pressing needs and growing weariness, his uncle's growing passion, Emma's growing affection. It only remained to set the ball rolling. This was not so easy. Sir William might be infatuated, but he was a diplomatist—second rate, but a diplomatist all the same—and an art dealer accustomed to driving bargains. He was not likely to give himself away, nor yet advance the price by showing undue eagerness, and he didn't. Greville had all the heavy work.

CHAPTER VII

A DISREPUTABLE INTRIGUE

(1)

By a sort of tacit agreement the discussion of the plan was put off until Sir William started on his tour of inspection round his Welsh estates. Greville meant to accompany him, as determinedly as his uncle meant to take him. But Sir William was in no hurry. Time was on his side, and he dawdled away month after month with the "fair tea-maker of Edgware Row," apparently oblivious of the main object for which he had returned home. But the time had to come, and it came early in June. Emma by common consent was despatched to the north to leave Greville and his uncle free to settle her future. "I am now off," Sir William wrote to Mary Hamilton on the 8th of June, "with Charles Greville for Wales and Scotland, and we shall go over a great deal of ground before we return to London early in the month of August." "A great deal of ground!" Sir William might have been writing metaphorically!

With the journey the negotiations began. Sir William expatiated on Greville's lack of prospects and argued the case for matrimony; that was the sensible course for Greville to take. Greville could not deny it, but would not admit it till he was sure of his ground; instead he emphasised the temporary nature of his difficulties and waxed sentimental over Emma—he could not bear to hurt her, he would not dream of dismissing her. So they went round in circles, both knowing the goal, both playing a game. Sir William's part was to hold back passive until

the fruit fell into his hands, and Greville, who lacked the nerve to make a direct proposal, could make no impression on the blank wall of his uncle's studied stupidity. He came back to London with no ready money and no testamentary promise. All he got was a small promise on account—just so much as would whet the appetite without doing Greville much good or Sir William much harm. The uncle agreed to help the nephew borrow such ready money as he needed at the moment. Not that he was going to back a bill in the ordinary way—the security was to be on his estate after his decease. To the extent of the loan Greville might depend on his uncle's will, but not an inch further.

Greville accepted the sop, and tried to pay his uncle back in coin; he also would make no promise, nor yet broach his plan openly. It should be left as a half hint, which Sir William might develop as and when he thought best.

So matters stood when in the middle of August the King encountered the precious pair in the royal drawing-room. "Well," said the King to Sir William, "and who shall you make your heir? I suppose your nephew, Mr Greville?" Greville opened his ears wide to hear the reply, but the wary diplomatist was not to be taken off his guard. That, he replied, was a secret he should certainly keep to himself; no one had any claim upon him, as his estate was not a paternal inheritance but the gift of his wife. Greville's hope at the question and vexation at the reply were both hidden by the sanctimonious "disinterestedness" of his expression.

(2)

It is pleasant to turn from these murky, underground windings to the fresh air of Emma's love. While this scandalous couple were trying to squeeze the last pip out of each other's oranges, she was sent out of the way. We have her own record of her doings, and a touching record

it is. The tale of her journey is soon told. There was no pomp or fashion to be wasted on her ; no need to bribe her wandering affections with high life and higher expenses. She could safely be packed off for the summer to a small watering-place in her native country, with no more than an injunction to be careful of the expense.

From London she travelled to Hawarden, where she picked up her small daughter, about two and a half years old, and with some heartburnings for Greville's sake, gave her grandmother five guineas for looking after the child. Thence she was to go to the sea for a course of sea-bathing, which was one of the recognised cures in those days for a variety of ills. Emma's complaint was nothing more than a form of skin disease which affected her elbows and knees. It is satisfactory to know that the sea (which she found very "soult") with the help of boiled bark cured her. She was to have gone to Abergele, but found it too far away and too expensive—two and a half "guines" a week for herself, her mother and her child. Highlake, better known as Hoylake, proved to possess but three houses, "and not one of them as is fit for a Christian." Even Emma's zeal for economy drew the line at that, and she finally settled on Parkgate, where the three wanderers were housed and fed by "a Laidy whoes husband is at sea" for the not exorbitant charge of one and a half guineas a week.

From Parkgate Emma wrote Greville a series of letters as full of fragrant charm as one could wish. They are merely a chronicle of small doings—the charge for bathing-dresses, the romps and quarrels with her baby, details of cost, and above all the outpourings of a full heart. There is a sweetness and simplicity and freshness about them that speak volumes for the beauty of her character. They are Emma's love letters, the only love letters she wrote, and as such are worthy of respect for all their want of grammar and originality of spelling.

Greville's answers were few and far between, and no longer

exist. It is a pity; one would like to know how Emma's effusions, poignant in their grateful love, affected the conspirator. He can scarcely have felt at ease, for he found occasion in these innocent letters to scold her, and over a venial sin, if ever a sin were venial. Now that Emma had her small baby with her she felt her heart going out to it with a new, strange yearning. Hitherto it had been far away, and in the joy of Greville's company she had forgotten it. But the presence of the babe tugged at some unsuspected tenderness in her soul, and she dared to suggest that the child should come back with her to Edgware Row.

Greville was shocked. He was also worried. That the child must be paid for he had always recognised. That Emma should contract that dreadful disease known as mother's love was a disaster that had never entered his head. And at such a time, when his whole thought was how to get her out of the country to Naples! It would be difficult enough to detach her clinging embrace from himself, and how would he fare if there were baby hands as well holding her back? He wrote peremptorily and angrily. The child must be put away and Emma must clear her mind of all such nonsense. Her reply is touching in its sad renunciation of her babe. Her submissive adoration of the great Greville was exemplary; she accepted the scolding and took his counsel to heart. The natural mother's instinct was scorched out of her and died, never to spring up again, not even with the birth of her second child.

But the letters shall speak for themselves.

"CHESTER, SATTURDAY MORN,
"(*June* 12, 1784).

"MY DEAR GREVILLE,

"I have had no letter from you yett which makes me unhappy. I cant go to Abbergelly as it is forty miles & a very uncumfortable place & I am now going to Parkgate as it is the only place beside High lake I can go to, but I will

try to go there. Pray my dear Greville, do write derectly & lett it be left at the post office, Parkgate tell calld for. God bless you, write. I have got my poor Emma with me & I have took leave of all my freinds. I have took her from a good home & I hope she will prove worthy of your goodness to her & her mother. I should not write now tell I got to Parkgate only I want to hear from you. Pray write my dear Greville directly & send me word how to bile that Bark for parting with you made me so unhappy I forgot the Book. I cant stop to write for the coach is waiting. My dear Greville dont be angry but I gave me Granmother 5 guines for she had laid some out on her & I would not take her awhay shabbily; but Emma shall pay you. Adue, my ever dear Greville & believe me, yours ever truly,

"EMMA HART

"I will write on Monday again. My love to Sir W. & say everything that you can, I am low-spirited so do excuse me my dear Greville, I wish I was with you. God bless you."

"PARKGATE,
"*June the* 15*th.* 1784.

"MY DEAREST GREVILLE,

"You see by the date where I am gott & likely to be & yett it is not through any neglect of seeking after other places for I have & as to Abbergely it is 40 miles & so dear that I could not with my mother & me & the child have been there under 2 guines & a half a week; it is grown such a fashionable place and High Lake as 3 houses in it & not one of them as is fit for a Christian, the best is a Publick house for the sailors of such ships as is oblidged to put in there so you see there is no possibility of going to either of those places. Has to where I am, I find it very comfortable considering from you. I am in the house of a Laidy whoes husband is at sea, she & her Granmother live to gether &

we board with her at present tell I hear from you. The price is high but the wont lodge any body without boarding and as it is comfortable decent & quiet I thought it would not ruin ous tell I could have your oppionon which I hope to have freily & without restraint as believe me you will give it to one who will always be happy to follow it. Lett it be what it will, as I am sure you would not lead me wrong & tho my little tempers may have been sometimes high believe me, I have allways thought you in the right in the end, when I have come to reason. I bathe & find the water very soult ; here is a great many Laidys batheing, but I have no society with them as it is best not, so pray my dearest Greville, write soon & tell me what to do as I will do just what you think proper & tell me what I am to do with the child for she is a great romp & I can hardly master her. I dont think she is ugly, but I think her greatly improved, she is tall, good eys & brows & all to gether she will be passible, but she has over grown all her cloaths. I am make-ing and mending all as I can for her. Pray my dear Greville do lett me come home as soon as you can for I am all most broken hearted being from you, endead I have no pleasure nor happiness. I wish I could not think on you, but if I was the greatest laidy in the world I would not be happy from you so dont lett me stay long. Tell Sir Wm. everything you can & tell him I am sorry our situation prevented me from giving him a kiss but my heart was ready to break but I will give it him & entreat if he will axcept it. Ask him how I looked & lett him say something kind to me when you write. Endead my dear Greville, you dont know how much I love you & your behaiver to me wen we parted was so kind, Greville, I dont know what to do but I will make you amends by my kind behaiver to you for I have grattude and I will show it you all as I can, so dont think of my faults Greville, think of all my good & blot out all my bad, for it is all gone & berried never to come again, so good by, my dear Greville, think of nobody but me for I have

not a thought but of you & praying for you & for ous to meet again. God bless you & believ me, yours truly & affectionately.

"EMMA H[T].

"*P.S.*—Poor Emma gives her duty to you. I bathe her & the people is very civel to ous. I give a guinea & half a week for ous all together but you will tell me what to do. God bless you, my dear, dear Greville, I long to see you for endead, I am not happy from you tho I will stay if you like tell a week before you go home, but I must go first. I have had no letter from you & you promised to write to me before I left home. It made me unhappy but I thought you might not have time. God bless you, once more goodby.

"Derect for me at Mrs. Darnwoods, Parkgate, near Chester & write derectly, to care of the whoman."

"PARKGATE,
"*June* 22, 1784.

"MY EVER DEAR GREVILLE,

"How teadous does the time pass a whay till I hear from you. I think it ages since I saw you & years since I heard from you. Endead, I should be miserable if I did not reccolect on what happy terms we parted—parted, yess, but to meet again with tenfould happiness. Oh, Greville, when I think on your goodness, your tender kindness, my heart is so full of grattatude that I want words to express it. But I have one happiness in vew which I am determined to practice & that is eveness of temper & steadyness of mind, for endead I have thought so much of your aimable goodness when you have been tried to the utmost that I will, endead I will, manege myself & try to be like Greville—endead I can never be like him. But I will do all I can towards it & I am sure you will not desire more. I think if the time would come over again I would be different. But it does not matter, there is nothing like

bying expearance, I may be happyer for it hearafter & I will think of the time coming & not the time past, except to make comparrasons to shew you what allterations there is for the best—so my Dearest Greville, don't think on my past follies, think on my good little as it has been & I will make you amends by my kind behavior; you shall never repent your partialaty.—& if you had not behaived with such angel like goodness to me at parting it would not have had such affect on me. But I have done nothing but think on you since & O Greville, did you but know when I do think, what thoughts—what tender thoughts, you would say Good God & can Emma have such feiling senceibility—no; I never could think it, but now I hope to bring her to conviction & she may now prove a valluable & aimable whoman—true, Greville & you shall not be disapointed. I will be everything you can wish. But mind you Greville, your troo great goodness has brought this at bear, for you dont know what I am. Would you think it Greville—Emma—the wild unthinking Emma is a grave thoughtful phylosopher. Tis true Greville & I will convince you I am when I see you. But how I am runing on—I say nothing abbout this guidy wild girl of mine: what shall we do with her, Greville, she is as wild & as thoughtless as somebody when she was a little girl, so you may gess how that is. Whether you will like it or no there is no telling, but one comfort is she is a little afraid on me. Would you believe on satturday whe had a little quarel, I mean Emma & me & I did slap her on her hands & when she came to kiss me & make it up I took her on my lap & cried. Now do you blame me or not, pray tell me. Oh Greville, you dont know how I love her, endead, I do, when she comes & looks in my face & calls me Mother. Endead, I then truly am a mother for all the mothers feilings rise at once & tels me I am or ought to be a mother, for she has a wright to my protection & she shall have it as long as I can & I will do all in my power to prevent her falling into the errors her poor

once miserable mother fell into. But why do I say miserable. Am not I happy abbove any of my sex, at least in my situation, does not Greville love me, or at least like me, does not he protect me, does not he provide for me, is not he a farther to my child. O why do I call myself miserable : no, it whas a mistake & I will be happy, chearful & kind & do all as my poor abbilitys will let me to return the Fartherly goodness & prottection he has shewn. Again, O my dear Greville, the reccolection of past scenes brings tears to my eys, but the are tears of happiness. To think of your goodness is two much. But once for all, Greville, I will be grateful. Adue.

"It is near batheing time & I must lay down my pen and I wont finish tell I see when the post comes whether there is a letter ; he comes in abbout one a clock. I hope to have a letter to day.

"I must not forgett to tell you my knees is well as I may say there is hardly a mark & my elbows is much better. I eat my vittuels very well & I am quite strong & feil hearty & well & I am in hopes I shall be very well ; you cant think how soult the watter is & there is a many Laidys bathing here. But, Greville, I am obliged to give a shilling a day for the dress : it is a great expence & it fretts me wen I think of it. But wen I think how well I am & my elbows likely to gett well, it makes me quite happy for at any rate it is better than paying the docter. But wright your oppionon freily & tell me what to do. Emma is crying because I wont come & bathe, so Greville, adue tell after I have dipt. May God bless you, my dearest Greville & believe me faithfully, affectionatly & truly yours only

"Emma H[t]."

"*Thursday morning*,

& no letter from my dear Greville. Why, my dearest G—— what is the reason you dont wright. If you knew my yneaseyness you would. You promised to wright

before I left Hawerden & I was much disapointed you did not, but thought you might not have a oppertunity being at Wandower Hill. I have sent 2 letters to Haverford West & has never had no answer to them & it is now 3 weeks since I saw you. Pray, my dearest Greville, wright to me & make me happy for I am not so att present, tho my arms is most well. I think if I could but hear from you I should be happy, so make me happy, do pray. Give my dear kind love & compliments to Pliney & tell him I put you under his care & he must be answerable for you to me wen I see him. I hope he has not fell in love with any raw boned Scotch whoman whoes fortune would make up for the want of Beauty & then he may soon through her in a decline—Mum—for he is fond of portraits in that whay & then he must be fond of orraigenals & it will answer every purpose. But dont put him in mind of it, for fear. But after all, say everything you can to him for me & tell him I shall allways think on him with grattude & remember him with pleasure & shall allways regret loesing is good company. Tell him I wish him every happiness this world can afford him, that I will pray for him & bless him as long as I live. But I am wrighting tis true, but I don't know when you will ever gett it for I cant send it tell I hear from you & the post wont be in tell to morro afternoon & I am in hopes I shall have a letter to morrow. Pray my dear Greville, lett me go home soon. I have been 3 weeks & if I stay fortinight longer that will be 5 weeks you know & then this expense is about 2 guineas a week with washing & batheing whoman & every thing & I think a fortnight or 3 weeks longer I shall not have a spot for you can scarce descovr any thing on my knees and arms."

"*Friday morning.* 12 *a clock.*
"(*June* 25)

"With what impatience do I sett down to wright tell I see the postman, but sure I shall have a letter to day.

Can you, my dear Greville, no you cant have forgot your poor Emma allready, endead, tho I am but for a few weeks absent from you, my heart will not one moment leave you, I am allways thinking of you and could allmost fancy I hear you, see you & think, Greville, what a disapointment when I find myself decieved & even has never heard from you. But my heart wont tell me scold you, endead, it thinks on you with two much tenderness, so do wright, my dear Greville, dont you remember how you promised, dont you reccolect what you said at parting how you should be happy to see me again. O Greville, think on me with kindness, think how many happy days, weeks & years, I hope, we may yett pass & think out of some that is past, there as been some little pleasure as well as pain & endead, did you but know how much I love you, you would freily forgive me any former quarels for I now suffer for them & one line from you would make me happy, so pray do wright & tell me when you will be returning as I shall be happy to see you again, for whilst Emma lives, she must be gratefully & ever affectionately yours,

"Emma Hart.

"*P.S.*—This shall not go tell I have a letter from you which I hope to have in half an hour. Adue, my dear, kind Greville."

"*Sunday morning.*
"(*June* 27)

"My dear Greville, I had a letter on Friday from my granmother & she sent me one from you that had been there a fortenight. I am much oblidged to you for all the kind things you say to me & tell Sir Will[m]. I am much oblidged to him for saying I looked well. I hope he will allways think so, for I am proud of is good word & I hope I shall never forfeit it, I will at least study to deserve it. I am in hopes to have a letter from you, for it is a great comfort to

me to hear from you & my dear Greville, it is now going on a month since I saw you, but I think how happy I shall be to see you again, to thank you for your kindness to my poor Emma & me. She shall thank you Greville, she shall be greatfull, she shall be good & make you amends for all the trouble her mother has caused you, but how I am to make you amends God knows, I shall never have it in my power, but Greville, you shall have no cause to complain, I will trye, I will do my utmost & I can only regret that fortune will not put it in my power to make a return for all the kindness & goodness you have shewd me. Good by, my dear Greville, God will bless you for me, I can only had my kindest wishes for you. Emma is much oblidged to you for remembering her & she hopes you will give her a oppertunity of thanking you personally for your goodness to her. I think you wont be disapointed in her, tho mothers—Lord bless me, what a word for the gay wild Emily to say—should not commend, but leave that for other people to do."

"(*June* or *July* 1784)

"Unkind Greville, yes I have got your letter but why do you scold me; if I wrote scral & ill, it was with thinking with two much kindness on you. You have mad me unhappy by scolding me; how can you when you know my dispotion, when you know it breaks my heart to be scolded & speacily by Greville, but I wont think you meant it ill-natured, tho you have maid me unhappy & if you had killd me, your kindness to my poor Emma would make me forget it for, endead, my Dear Greville, I love you two well to neglect you in any one point, so pray forgive me—& has to your goodness in regard to agreaments, endead I will come in to all as you propose: I will give her up to you intirely; do what you will with her, I here sollemnly say that I will never break from my word. You shall take her, put her there where you propose, lest any quarels, tho I hope there will be none—hope she shall stay whear you

propose putting her. Lett what will happen I give her up to you to act as you think proper by her. Take her, Greville & may God reward you for it, tho her Mother cant. All as I desire is that if you will lett me take her home when I go to stay tell you come to see her whilst she is there. Nobody shall see her, tho neither you nor I need be ashaimd of her, but if you dont like that, I will give it up, so you see, My Dearest Greville, what confidence I put in you know. Scold me, unkind Greville, how can you do so. Pray wright to me derectly & wright kind. Give my Dear kind love to Sr. Will[m]. Say everything from me that you can for endead I love him. I should not now wright in such a hurry only if I dont send it of by 4 oclock I cant send it of tell Tuesday, so dont think that I cant spare a hour, yes, 6 hours, all my whole life I could spare to do anything for Greville, so God bless you, my dear Greville. Mrs. Ladmore is gone to live at Chester or I should have gone there, that is my reason as I am at Mrs. Downwards, but it is the cheapest place I could gett for she thinks nothing a trouble, she eat soult watter 4 or 5 times a day for me to wash my elbows in, but pray lett me come to town before you if it is only a day or two, you know my reason. It may be some comfort to you peraps to know that my elbows & knees is allmost well & I never was better in my life, so Greville, if you will be happy to see me, you will find me in good health, handsome & fonder & kinder to you than ever. So my dearest Greville, why did you scold me, I would not have scolded you at so great distance, but I will forgive you & I say again you shall see me every thing you can wish & I will be allways yours ever affectionatly & sincerely

"E. H. Adue."

"PARKGATE.

"*July the 3rd.* 1784.

"I was very happy, my Dearest Greville, to hear from you as your other letter vexd me, you scolded me so, but it

is over & I forgive you. I am much oblidged to you for all the kind things you say to me & I am very happy to think we shall meet soon again, happy, good humerd & chearfull. I will be so & I think there is no fear of you. You dont know, my Dearest Greville, what a pleasure I have to think that poor Emma will be comfortable & happy & Greville, if she does but turn out well, what a happyness it will be & I hope she will for your sake. I will teach her to pray for you as long as she lives & if she is not grateful & good it wont be my fault but what you say is very true, a bad dispotion may be made good by good example & Greville would not put her any whear to have a bad one. I come in to your whay a thinking Hollidays spoils children: it takes there attention of from there scool, it gives them a bad habbit, when the have been a month & goes back, this does not pleas them & that is not wright & the do nothing but think wen the shall go back again. Now Emma, will never expect what she never had, so I hope she will be very good, mild & attentive & we may have a deal of comfort. O Greville, if her poor mother had ever had the luck & prospect, mearly in haveing a good edducation that she has, what a whoman might she have been, but I wont think. All my happiness is now Greville & to think that he loves me makes a recompense for all, for if he did not love me would he be so good, kind & affectionate, no, tis imposible, therefore I will have it so. I have said all as I have to say abbout Emma yet, only she gives her duty & I will now tell you a little abbout myself. I have not took but 2 of those things from Mr. W—— as the sea watter has done me so much good. I have drunk a tumbler glas every morning fasting, walkd half a hour & then bathed & Breakfasted. I have had the tang apploy'd to my knees & elbows every night going to bed & every day washd them twice a day in sea water & they are just well, therefore, as long as I stay I had better go on in my old whay for I can take Mr. W's prescription at home, but not sea water, tang etc. I am very well, looks well, has a good

appetite, & is better than ever I was in my life. I have no society with anybody but the mistress of the House & her mother and sister. The latter is a very genteel yong lady, good nattured & does every thing to pleas me; but still I would rather be at home if you was there. I follow the old saying, home is home, if ever so homely. I must go to diner therefore will say no more but that I long to see you & dear Sr. W. Give my kind, kind love to him, tell him next to you I love him abbove any body & that I wish I was with him to give him a kiss. Dont be affronted Greville, if I was with you I would give you a thousand & you might take as many as you plased for I long, I mean I long to see you. I sopose you will scold next. Adue. I hope to have a letter from you this next week. We have been a month from home today, Greville, its a great wile. My mother gives her compts. to you & Sr. W. & say everything that is kind or will render me dear to him; to more than you can say my heart with gratiude assents & I must ever remain yours ever affectionately & sincerely

"E. H.

"*P.S.*—Good by, my dear Greville, I hope we shall meet soon, happy & well. Adue. I bathe Emma & she is very well & grows & her hair will grow very well on her forehead & I dont think her nose will be very snub, her eyes is blue & pretty, but she dont speak through her nose, but she speaks countryfied, but she will forget it. We squabble sometimes, still, she is fond of me & endead I love her for she is senceble, so much for beauty. Adue. I long to see you."

"Edgware Road,
"*Tuesday, August* 10, 1784.

"I received your kind letter last night & my Dearest Greville I *want words* to *express* to you how *happy* it made me, for I thought I was like a lost sheep & everybody had

forsook me. I was eight days confined to my room, very ill, but am, thank God, very well now, & a deal better for your kind instructing letter & I own the justness of your remark. You shall have your appartments to your self, you shall read, wright or set still just as you pleas, for I shall think my self happy to be under the seam roof with Greville & do all I can to make it agreable with out disturbing him in any pursuits that he can follow, to employ himself in at home or else whare, for your absence has taught me that I ought to think my self happy if I was within a mile of you, so as I could see the place as contained you, I should think myself happy abbove my shear, so, my Dear G, come home & you shall find your home comfortable to receave you, you shall find me good, kind, gentle & affectionate & every thing you wish me to do I will do for I will give myself a fair trial & follow your advice for I allways think it wright, therefore will own myself wrong & begin again on a sure fowndation that shall ensure happyness for ous boath. Dont think Greville, this the wild fancy of a moments consideration, it is not. I have thoughraly considered everything in my confinement & *I say nothing now but what I shall practice.*

"I must now inform you abbout my illness My Dear Greville. I had a rash out all over me and a fevour & I should have been worse if I had not had the rash out, but I think I am better for it now for I look fair & seems better in health than I was before. I dare say I should have been very dangerously ill iff it had not come out. Pray my Dearest Greville, do come to see me as soon as ever you come in to town, for I do so long to see you, you dont know & it will make me so happy. But I mean if you should come to town before diner, do come because I now you will come at night. I have a deal to say to you when I see you. Oh Greville, to think it is nine weeks since I saw you. I think I shall die with the pleasure of seeing you. Endead, my Dearest Greville, if you knew how much I think of you, you would love for it, for I am allways thinking on you, of

your goodness, in short Greville, I truly love you & the thought of your coming home so soon makes me so happy I dont know what to do. Good by, my ever Dearest Greville, may God preserve & bless you for ever, pray yours ever affectionately & sencerely

"EMMA.

"My kind love to Sr. Wm. & tell him if he will come soon, I will give him a thousand *kisses*, for I do love him a little. Emma is very well & is allways wondering why you dont come home; she sends her duty to you. Good by, My Dearest Greville, pray, pray come as soon as you come to town. Good by. God bless you. O how I long to see you. Adue."

(3)

The last stage of the disreputable intrigue between Greville and his uncle took an undue time. Sir William left England in September 1784 without going beyond his contingent promise of help and a strong recommendation that Greville should marry. He was hardly out of the country before Greville began a long series of letters. At first, and until he began to receive Sir William's replies, he confined himself mainly to politics, but with the new year he changed his tune. His first letter of 1785 plunged straight into Emma's affairs. He praised her wonderful improvement, and then hinted delicately at the possibility of her being snapped up. After which he proceeded to an elaborate discussion of his own affairs, hinting at marriage and at the embarrassment he felt about Emma, referring briefly to Sir William's promised security, and then almost apropos of nothing, ending up with "give me your opinion honestly."

This new move was not without effect. Sir William inquired anxiously in his reply for news of the political

situation. What were Greville's prospects? Meanwhile, without waiting for Greville's answer, he began launching a much more potent bolt. For some time he wrote nothing, but took very good care that rumours should reach Greville's ears. The rumours were alarming and bowled over all Greville's defences. They were simply stories of Sir William's falling in love and contemplating marriage.

Greville wrote in a panic and quite a new style. "It must be a very interested friend indeed," he declared, "who does not sincerely wish everything that can give happiness to a friend. I sincerely wish that happiness to you. I am from frequent experience convinced that I can judge for you. . . . If you did not chuse a wife, I wish the tea-maker of Edgware Row was yours." Sir William's reply no longer exists, but apparently consisted of an offer to invite Emma over to Naples, so relieving Greville of the expense. Good as far as it went, but how about the payment? Very much agitated lest Sir William should get the prize without cost, Greville wrote one of the most extraordinary letters on record. He condemned the proposal that Emma should do the honours of the Ambassador's house as most unseemly, hinted that his uncle had been tampering with Emma, and after a long dissertation on Emma's character and the part he had played in forming it, came at last to the point. "What you say is true, that so beautiful a person cannot be long without a protector; there is no doubt of that, but it is not her wish to run the gauntlet, and for the present I do not see that I should better myself much by putting her in that situation. . . . But above all, I own that I think I lose opportunities of settling to advantage; when home is comfortable, other pursuits are less interesting, and to sink into a retreat of this sort at my time of life is what in others I should condemn. You may say that at yours it may also be absurd; every man to his idea. At your age a clean and comfortable woman is not superfluous, but I should rather purchase it

than acquire it, unless in every respect a proper party offered. Would your friends have thought Ly. C. a more prudent connexion than E ? I know the sentiments of all your friends, and my delicacy prevented my writing on that subject. . . . Your brother spoke openly to me, that he thought the wisest thing you could do would be to buy love ready made, and that it was not from any interested wish, as he was perfectly satisfied with the fortune he had, that it was enough for his family, and that he should be very glad to hear you declare openly your successor, and particularly so if you named me." Then after referring to the proposed loan, he went on : " I will speak out also in relation to my future assistance, and there is only one case in which I should wish to know your intentions and build upon them, which is in case I ever should by any such declaration of yours obtain the consent of the relations of a lady whose fortune would enable me to live comfortably, and by the future provision which after your death you should settle on us, insure a provision for children, if any there should be."

This letter did the job. Sir William accepted the terms, which were probably less than he had feared, and certainly less than he would have had to offer, if he had not forced Greville to state his price. Greville's relief was manifest—and sickening. " I will not tell you," he wrote, " what I think of your letter, but I shall, if possible, respect and love you more than I have hitherto done." The lady whose fortune he had in mind was the daughter of Lord Middleton. He at once told her father of Sir William's decision to make him his heir, but as usual bungled his proposal badly, merely declaring that he thought the family " amiable " and the daughter " interesting," and hoping that he might always retain their friendship. He explained that he had written in this precious style because " I had not grounds for a proposal ; if their partiality for me should get over the real objections which they might start, they may lead my letter into that consequence ; if not, it will drop without a

refusal being necessary." A refusal *was* unnecessary; the lady married the Earl of Scarborough.

Now that the principals had agreed, there remained nothing to be done but to persuade the victim to the sacrifice. Greville, as ever, went to his goal crab-wise. He began to prepare Emma's mind by flinging out questions that must have puzzled and pained the poor girl. What did she think of Sir William? Had he been kind to her? Whom did she love best after himself? Supposing he should die? Supposing he should slight her? To whom would she turn by preference? And so on. Finally he began to expatiate on the need for economy, and talk regretfully of methods beyond his purse for improving her. So by degrees he worked round to a visit to Naples—not a long visit, only six months while he cut down expenses and looked after some affairs in Scotland. At last the invitation came from Sir William, and Emma was very reluctantly persuaded to accept it.

But Greville had no intention of packing her off until the bond was duly sealed and delivered. She was sent for a six weeks' visit to the sea while Greville amused himself down in Cornwall. He came back to find her worried over her mother's ill-health—she had suffered a slight stroke. From his point of view this was all for the best, because the bond which he had received was not at all to his liking. He wrote to Sir William that Emma could not be worried for the moment, adding, "I told you in my letter of thanks for the signed bond that sealing and signing was nothing without a witness's name; you will, therefore, be so good as to send it back with that addition." A month later he reported that Emma was more disposed to fall in with the plan, and raised the price by forwarding a bond for a greater amount. He also explained that the travelling expenses would be thirty guineas which Sir William must pay.

Sir William raised no difficulties; he signed the new

bond and forwarded fifty guineas for the journey. Greville had no further excuse for delay or haggling, and in the middle of March Emma and her mother set out, reaching Naples on the 26th of April 1786, Emma's twenty-first birthday.

(4)

Both the conspirators had agreed that getting Emma out to Naples would be a difficulty, and had taken a mint of trouble to smooth the way. Their fears were the natural outcome of their guilty consciences. But why was Emma so reluctant? After all, the plan as proposed by Greville had nothing to terrify the most timid—and Emma was never timid. All she was asked to do was to spend a matter of some six months in a gay capital with her mother as a chaperone and an indulgent quasi-uncle to amuse her. Nothing was here for tears. Of course it meant six months' absence from the man of her heart, but her reluctance went far deeper than merely the sweet sorrow of parting, and her dejection arose from a source that was hard for her to explain and yet was entirely honourable.

Her feelings can be realised if we recall the atmosphere in which she had lived and the characteristics of the time. The age possessed very little morality and an intolerable deal of licentiousness. Much lip service was paid to womanhood in the abstract, but women in the flesh were nothing but men's playthings. No girl was secure from unwelcome attentions in the street, not even those of the highest rank and position. Within doors, except in the family circle, they were sometimes liable to more than mere attentions. "Dr Wall," wrote Fanny Burney of her host on one occasion, "was so drolly troublesome to me during the rest of the time we stayed . . . that I was fain to struggle most furiously to free myself from him; yet there was such a comic queerness in his manner all the time that, as I *succeeded* in keeping off *caresses*, I could not but

be mightily diverted with him." Chaperones were then no relics of the past, nor yet concessions to the prudish feelings of Mrs Grundy. They were real necessities, and as often as not very inadequate protectors even when doing their best.

If polite society adopted this attitude, still more so did the circle to which Emma belonged. She can scarcely have heard of any ideals which she did not imagine for herself or learn in a debased form from Greville. Female acquaintance she had none; her more fortunate sisters did not so much despise as disregard her; others Greville would not let her know. As for the men she met, to them she was a woman of easy virtue and was treated accordingly. She had been admired often enough, and admiration had invariably been the prelude to passion. Emma's idea of men must have been coloured by her experience. Now Sir William had admired her in England, and the only construction which Emma could have placed on this admiration was that Sir William desired her. It was the natural deduction for her to make, and it happened also to be the fact. She had told Greville as much, probably with a certain pride at having carried out his instructions so well. Whilst he was in England, she felt no fear, but Naples was another story. Sir William could have invited her only for one purpose, and as she was in love with Greville, she could not yield herself to anyone else. With these ideas dominant in her mind, it is easy to see why she was reluctant to go to Naples. The fact that she went at all speaks volumes for her devotion to Greville and her own reliance on herself.

(5)

As Greville henceforward ceases to be a leading actor, this is a fitting moment to sum up his influence upon Emma.

His interminable letters of 1784-5 tell us much less about Emma than he thinks and much more than he imagines.

He sets out her qualities in the manner of an auctioneer's catalogue—as was right enough from a seller to a prospective purchaser—but the resultant picture is lifeless and contradictory because he had not begun to fathom her character. The mainspring of her life at this time was a wonderfully deep and tender love for Greville. It was this love that completely changed her character, subduing and almost annihilating her natural propensities. "You know," wrote Greville to his uncle, "that from giddiness and disipation she is prudent and quiet, and that, surrounded with temptations, I have not any the least reason to complain of her." He added, "the secret is simple—she has pride and vanity." The secret was far simpler; she had love. But love was a matter that Greville could not understand. He had no conception either of the grand passion, or of its more tender and generally more abiding sister. He had ladies enough, but chose them on a system of his own, in which passion and desire seem to have played a minor part. His letters are always pedantic and obscure to a degree, but for what it is worth, he explains his system in these words: "After the first connexion the crime of seduction becomes less weighty. It is justice. Extend the laws of rape to every woman, as well as to virgins, and seduction is equally a burthen to an honest mind which has given way to the passions. Therefore I always have kept free from those reflections, by never having taken a woman from a better to a worse situation, and God knows there are more charming and unfortunate women than a man can set his face to, so general are seducers, and as you know from some friends, so much are gallantries countenanced." From which one gathers that to avoid any possible twinge of conscience, he preferred to make shift with a cast-off mistress rather than gratify an honest, if unhallowed, passion; and was delighted to find that a kindly Providence so far approved his course as to give him an even greater supply than he needed. Such a man was as little

likely to appreciate love as he was obviously incapable of understanding morality.

But he was the man who held Emma's heart, and on whom we have to depend for a picture of her. Making allowances for his cold-bloodedness and conceit, we can get a very fair idea. We know what to think when we learn that her submissiveness, founded in adoration, was the result of his clever management. We understand why her little outbursts of temper—and Greville must have been exasperating—are proof positive of her pride.

With the necessary adjustments we find that Emma was a devoted slave of the egregious Greville, living in almost complete retirement and spending next door to nothing on herself, though she managed to spare money for her relations out of her little allowance. A more exemplary character could hardly be imagined—cheerful, loving, generous and devoted, accepting such trifling attentions as Greville was pleased to pay her with pathetic pleasure. And Greville, whose one superiority was his accent, writes complacently, "infinite have been my pains to make her respect herself and act fairly." He might have spared himself every one of those infinite pains, for Emma's native love had risen far higher than he could see and taught her more than he had to teach, not only accomplishments and manners, but virtue itself.

Emma's life was not immaculate. Putting aside all mere gossip which may or may not have been well founded, the curtain rises upon her as the mistress of a profligate country squire, and goes down upon her as the mistress of a very different type of man. But she was no mere wanton. At no period of her life did sex predominate in her to half the extent that it predominates in much of modern society. On the contrary, the instinct uppermost in her heart was to be true to her man. She tried to be loyal to Fetherstonehaugh, purely out of a natural instinct, since she had no real love for him. When she went to Greville, she

never dreamed of being disloyal, as Greville recognised. Rich and even honourable offers came her way, but (to use Greville's words) she was disinterested and refused them all. Greville writes of " her steadiness in the most frail steps of her sex," and with his usual conceit puts it down to his clever handling of her.

While she possessed this inherent faithfulness, bulwarked in Greville's case by a passionate devotion, her worthy mentor confesses, " I have often told her that I never expected from a woman a power to withstand favourable opportunity and a long siege." That was the teaching she received from the man to whom she had previously written in all sincerity and truth, " You shall find me good, kind, gentle & affectionate & everything you wish me to do I will do, for I will give myself a fair trial & follow your advice for I allways think it wright." If she thought him right in this particular, she fought a losing battle bravely. It was not until Greville himself had crushed her to the ground that she gave herself to another, hopelessly and without love—her life spoilt with her idol. No one can read her heartrending letters to Greville from the palace-prison of Naples and suggest that Emma was anything but a virtuous woman. Her past, whatever it may have been, was the offspring of ignorance and youth and had been washed away in the ocean of her love. The stains that were to come were Greville's shame—though her undoing.

CHAPTER VIII

A BROKEN IDOL

(1)

With Emma on her way to Naples, Greville felt sure of the Welsh estate, and began busying himself with plans for its improvement. Its development would cost money, and he prudently proposed that his uncle should sink the capital and stand the loss during the first unremunerative years, so enabling him to step into a greater fortune than ever. The estate lay round Milford Haven, and his proposal was to turn it into a flourishing port, get the Custom House removed there from Pembroke, and then settle a colony of American fishermen "to carry on the whale fishery from thence to the South of Falkland Islands." He not only wanted Government assistance but carte blanche from his uncle for the scheme "which you cannot think bad if it can be brought about. It will only occasion a capital of £100,000 to be embarked on your land." The development of Milford Haven plays its part in Emma's story, but for the moment there is nothing to be said except that Sir William ignored the request for a free hand.

Meanwhile he was awaiting Emma's arrival with a curious mixture of hope and fear. As he wrote to Greville, "The prospect of possessing so delightfull an object under my roof soon certainly causes in me some pleasing sensations, but they are accompanied with some anxious thoughts as to the prudent management of this business; however, I will do as well as I can, and hobble in and out of this pleasant scrape as decently as I can."

He welcomed Emma the next day with open arms and

treated her like a princess. A suite of four rooms had been prepared for her overlooking the bay, and carriages, servants and boats placed at her disposal. Every day there was some entertainment or amusement—dinners, operas, plays—a whirl of distraction and gaiety, with Sir William hovering round, anticipating her least wish.

Yet Emma was not happy. She could see through the deference of Sir William. She read the symptoms of his wishes with an unerring eye, and poured out a description of them in a letter to Greville written four days after her arrival. Any last lingering doubt she may have had disappeared on the fifth day when Sir William broached the subject more directly. "I have had a conversation this morning," she added in a hurried, breathless postscript, "with Sr. Wm. which has made me mad. He speaks half I do not know what to make of it."

Pathos and resignation run through her letter, mingled with touching proofs of love. And here and there peeps out a very human and lovable vanity, which, even in the midst of dejection and alarm, cannot but take delight in the compliments and flatteries heaped upon her. At the end, after the conversation with Sir William, the letter bursts into flaming indignation. It is a beautiful letter for all its magnificent inconsequence, and expressive of a deep and beautiful nature.

Emma to Greville.

"NAPLES,
"*April 30th*, 1786.

"MY DEAREST GREVILLE,

"I arrived at this place the 26th. & I should have begun to write sooner but the post does not go out tell to morro & I dreaded setting down to write for I try to apear as chearful before Sr. Wm. as I can & I am sure to cry the moment I think of you, for I feil more & more unhappy at being seperatted from you, & if my total ruin depends

on seeing you, I will & must in the end of the sumer, for to live without you is impossible. I love you to that degree that at this time their is not a hardship opon hearth, either of poverty, hunger, cold, death, or even to walk barefooted to Scotland to see you, but what I would undergo. Therefore, my dear, dear Greville, if you do love me, for God sake & for my sake, try all you can to come hear as soon as possible. You have a true friend in Sr. Wm. and he will be happy to see you & do all he can to make you happy & for me, I will be everything you can wish for. I find it is not either a fine house or a fine coach or a pack of servants or plays or operas can make me happy, it is you that as it in your power, either to make me very happy, or very miserable. I respect Sr. Wm. I have a great regard for him as the uncle & freind of you & he loves me, Greville, but he can never be any thing nearer to me than your Uncle & my sincere freind, he never can be my lover. You do not know how good Sr. Wm. is to me, he is doing every thing he can to make me happy, he as never dined out since I came hear & endead to spake the truth he is never out of my sight, he breakfastes, dines, supes, & is constantly by me, looking in my face, I cant stir a hand, a legg, or foot but what he is marking as graceful & fine & I am sorry to say it, but he loves me now as much as ever he could Lady Bolingbroke, endead, I am sorry, for I canot make him happy, I can be civil, oblidging, & I do try to make my self as agreable as I can to him, but I belong to you, Greville & to you onely will I belong & nobody shall be your heir apearant. You do not know how glad I was to arrive the day I did, as it was my Birthday & I was very low spirited. Oh God, that day that you used to smile on me & stay at home & be kind to me, that that day I should be at such a distance, but my comfort is I rely on your promise & september or october I shall see you, but I am quite unhappy at not hearing from you, no letter for me yet Greville, but I must wait with patience. We have had company

most every day since I came, some of Sr. Wm's freinds. They are all very much pleased with me & poor Sir W. is never so happy as when he is pointing out my beauties to them. He thinks I am grown much more ansome than I was, he does nothing all day but look at me & sigh. Yes, last night we had a little concert, but then I was low, for I wanted you to partake of our amusement. Sir Thomas Rumbold is hear with is son who is dying of a decline, it is a son he had by is first wife & poor young man, he canot walk from the bed to the chair & Lady Rumbold, like a tender hearted rretch is gone to Rome to pass her time there with the English, and as took the coach & all the English servants with her & left poor Sr. Thomas hear with is heart broken waiting on is sick son. You cant think what a worthy man he is, he dind with ous & likes me very much & every day as brought is carridge or phaeton, which he as bought hear, & carried me & my mother & Sr. W. out & shows ous a deal of civelaties, for you are to understand I have a caridge of Sr. Ws, a English one painting & new livereys & new coach man, foot man &c. the same as Mrs Damer for of her own, for she did not go with is. If I was going abbout in is carridge they would say I was either is wife or mistress, therefore as I am not or ever can be either, we have made a very good establishment of 4 rooms very pleasant, looking to the sea, our boat comes out to day for the first time & we shall begin to bathe in a day or two & we are going for one day or two to Caserta. I was at Pasilipo yesterday, I think it a very pretty place. Sr. W. as given me a camels shawl like my old one. I know you will be pleased to hear that & he as given me a beautiful goun, cost 25 guineas, India painting on wite sattin, & several little things of Lady Hamiltons & is going to by me some muslin dresses loose to tye with a sash for the hot wether, made like the turkey dresses, the sleeves tyed in fowlds with ribban & trimed with lace, in short he is all ways contriving what he shall get for me. The people admires my English dresses,

but the blue hat, Greville, pleases most. Sr. W. is quite enchanted with it. Oh. how he loves you. He told me he had made is will & left you every thing belonging to him ; that made me very happy for your sake. Pray, my dear Greville, do write me word if you want any money. I am affraid I distressd you but I am sure Sr. W. will send you some & I told him he must help you a little now & send you some for your jurney hear & he kissd me & the tears came into is eyes & told me I might comand any thing for he loved ous boath dearly & Oh. how happy shall I be when I can once more see you, my dear, dear Greville. You are every thing that is dear to me on hearth & I hope happier times will soon restore you to me for endead I would rather be with you starving, than from you in the greatest splender in the world. I have onely to say I enclose this I wrote yesterday & I will not venture myself now to wright any more for my mind & heart is so torn by differant passions that I shall go mad, onely Greville, remember your promise, October. Sr. Wm. says you never mentioned to him abbout coming to Naples at all, but you know the consequence of your not coming for me. Endead, my dear Greville, I live but on the hope of seeing you & if you do not come hear, lett what will be the consequence, I will come to England. I have had a conversation this morning with Sr. Wm. that has made me mad. He speaks half I do not know what to make of it, but Greville, my dear Greville, wright some comfort to me, pray do, if you love me, but onely remember you will never be loved by any body like your affectionate & sencere

"EMMA.

" *P.S.*—Pray, for God sake wright to me & come to me, for Sr. W. shall never be any thing to me but your freind."

It is an interesting commentary on both Greville's teaching and Emma's view of life that she did not think the worse of Sir William for what she believed to be his

intentions. Even in the last flare up of her letter, she uttered no word of depreciation against him. In a later letter she actually said, "But write to Sr. William, what as he done to affront you?" To her mind his desires were perfectly natural; the difficulties and the shame were hers alone. If this was the result of her experiences, it can be understood—all men had treated her so. If it was confirmed by Greville's teaching, we can only compare that teaching with Emma's untutored feelings, and sigh regretfully over the waste of such material. The more one reads Emma's early letters in the setting of the age, the more evident it becomes that nature had created her one of its finest pieces. No one can deny Emma's beauty of face and form; it is patent in Romney's pictures. Nor can any one who reads her early letters fail to find a transparently honest mind, endowed with a natural refinement and a tremendous courage and devotion. Its last state was to its first what Gillray's caricatures of her body are to Romney's portraits; and if Emma is to be branded as a notorious adventuress, it is worth remembering that the material was better than the product, and that the potter is more to blame than the clay. This point is mentioned once again because with her arrival at Naples the halcyon days had ended; the taint was laid upon her—Heaven knows against her will—and from that moment it began to spread, slowly at first but more quickly thereafter, until with the man and the occasion she turned her back on the brightness of her youth and deliberately began the long downward path to degradation.

So natural did Emma regard Sir William's proposals that she almost makes us forget his villainy. We, who know the discreditable intrigue between nephew and uncle, may read Emma's words, "You have a true friend in Sr. Wm.," and agree with a mental reservation. But Emma was in the dark. When she wrote those words, she knew only that she was visiting Greville's uncle partly to be

improved in manners and accomplishments and partly to help Greville over an awkward financial crisis. The uncle was for the time being a trustee of his nephew's property, and the uncle she knew had designs on that property. Yet not a word of censure, only a passionate protestation of her own love and loyalty. She brings out the better traits in Sir William's character—unknowingly sometimes, as in that poignant little picture, " I told him he must help you a little now & send you some (money) for your jurney hear, & he kiss'd me & the tears came into is eyes, & told me I might command anything, for he loved ous boath dearly." Those tears were stung out of him by conscience as he listened to her pleas for the thankless plotter and realised the prospect of her awakening, and yet her simple truth invests them with a touch of affection.

(2)

Nelson described Naples as " a country full of fiddlers and poets, whores and scoundrels."

It was natural for the religiously minded man of action to fix on the habits and characteristics of the inhabitants. Emma, with her more external view of things, completed the picture. " I must stop," she wrote to Greville three months after her arrival, " or else I should begin & tell you my ideas of the people of Naples, in my next I will. But Greville, fleas and lice their is millions."

It was a lazy, pleasure-loving, corrupt capital to which she had come, where life was one long riot, without restraint and without thought of the morrow. Emma could not have been hidden, if she had wanted to be ; the men swarmed round her pretty face before she had properly arrived. Her days were one triumphal progress—and yet the pleasure she took in it all was only on the surface.

She was given a language master, a singing master, a music master. Every artist of note was commissioned

to paint her picture or carve her bust; she was swamping Italy with canvasses and cameos. "Their is two painters now in the house painting me . . . as soon as these is finished ther is two more to paint me & Angelaca if she comes, & Marchmont is to cut a head of me for a ring."

What time could be spared from sittings was taken up with bathing, drives, walks in the gardens and entertainments. "I am going," says the same letter, "to Paysylipo to diner & I have a conversazyeone tonight & a concert." There were also excursions to the neighbouring places of interest, Pompeii, Herculaneum and Vesuvius, and rows across the bay to the islands in the vicinity. And always she was surrounded by a crowd of admirers. "I walk in the Villa Reale every night, I have generally two princes, two or 3 nobles, the English minister & the King, with a crowd beyound ous." Even the King "as eyes, he as a heart, & I have made an impression on his heart."

There was enough and to spare to turn any young girl's head. Emma could scarcely have been blamed if she had flung discretion to the winds and seized with both hands the brilliant splendours apparently within her reach. She had never experienced the like, not even in the giddy days of Up Park, still less in the restricted air of Edgware Row. And she had no training to curb her natural desires. But her love was proof against it all, proof even against the continued and ominous silence of her Greville. She could still declare with perfect sincerity that she would gladly exchange the pomp and glitter of her new position for Greville's company and "one guiney a week for everything." Even the crowd of royal and noble admirers appealed to her most as a worthy audience to hear Greville's praises, and perhaps also as a spur to prick Greville's jealousy. The King, she wrote gleefully to Greville, "told the Prince, Hamilton is my friend & she belongs to his Nephey, for all our friends knows it and the Prince desires his best compliments to you." She treasured up any chance word or

look that redounded to Greville's credit—even the praise bestowed on a hat that he had given her.

Her heart was not in the flattering splendour of her position, but groping about in memories of Edgware Row, and week by week she sat down to a letter in which she opened her soul to Greville and retailed the tattle of Naples. The letters are mostly lost, but two remain. The first has been given ; here is the fourteenth.

Emma to Greville.

"NAPLES.

"*July the 22nd.* 1786.

"MY EVER DEAREST GREVILLE,

"I am now onely writeing to beg of you for God sake to send me one letter if it is onely a farewell ; sure I have deserved this for the sake of the love you once had for me. Think, Greville, of our former connexion & dont despise me ; I have not used you ill in any one thing, I have been from you going of six months & you have wrote one letter to me, ensted of which I have sent fourteen to you. Pray lett me beg of you, my much loved Greville, onely one line from your dear, dear hands & you dont know how thankful I shall be for it, for if you knew the misery I feel, Oh your heart would not be intirely shut up against me for I love you with the truist affection & dont lett any body sett you against me, some of your freinds, or your foes peraps, I dont know what to stile them. I know they have long wisht me ill, but Greville, you never will meet with any body that has a truer affection for you than I have & I onely wish it was in my power to shew you what I could do for you. As soon as I know your determination I shall take my own mesures. If I dont hear from you & that you are coming according to promise, I shall be in England by Cristmas at farthest, dont be unhappy at that, I will see you once more for the last time. I find life is unsuportable with out you. Oh my heart is intirely broke. Then for

God sake, my ever dear Greville, do write me some comfort. I dont know what to do, I am now in that state I am incapable of any thing. I have a language master, a singing master, musick, &c. &c. but what is it for, if it was to amuse you I should be happy, but Greville, what will it avail me. I am poor, helpeless & forlorn. I have lived with you 5 years & you have sent me to a strange place & no one prospect, me thinking you was coming to me; instead of which I was told I was to live, you know how, with Sr. W. No. I respect him, but no, never, shall he peraps live with me for a little wile like you & send me to England, then what am I to do, what is to become of me. But excuse me, my heart is ful. I tell you give me one guiney a week for every thing & live with me & I will be contented, but no more I will trust to providence & whare ever you go, God bless you & preserve you & may you allways be happy. But write to Sr. William, what as he done to affront you. If I have spirits I will tell you something concerning how we go on, that will make my letter worth paying for. Sr. Wm. wants a picture of me the sise of the Bacante for his new appartments & he will take that picture of me in the Black gown at Romneys & I have made the bargin with him that the picture shall still be yours if he will pay for it & he will & I have wrote to Romney to send it. Their is two painters now in the house painting me; one picture is finished. It is the size of the Bacante setting in a turbin, a turkish dress, the other is in a black rubin hat with fethers, blue silk gown &c. but as soon as these is finished ther is two more to paint me & Angelaca if she comes, & Marchmont is to cut a head of me for a ring. I wish Angelaca would come for Prince Draydrixton [Dietrichstein] from Veina is hear & dines with ous often & he wants a picture of me—he is my cavaliere servente or chechespeo which you like. He is much in love with me. I walk in the Villa Reale every night, I have generally two princes, two or 3 nobles, the English minister & the King, with a crowd beyound ous. The Queen likes

me much & desired Prince Draydrixton to walk with me near her, that she might get a sight of me, for the Prince when he is not with ous, he is with the Queen & he does notthing but entertains her with my beauty, the accounts of it &c. &c. But Greville, the King as eyes, he as a heart & I have made an impression on his heart, but he told the Prince, Hamilton is my freind & she belongs to his Nephey, for all our freinds knows it and the Prince desires his best compliments to you. I must tell you a peice of gallantry of the K. on Sunday. He dined at Paysilipo & he allways comes every Sunday before the Casina in his boat to look at me—we had a small deplomatic party & we was sailing in our boat. The K. directly came up, put his boat of musick next us & made all the French horns & the whole band play, he took off his hat & sett with his hat on his knees all the wile & when we was going to land, he made his bow & said it was a sin he could not speak English, but I have him every night in my train at the Villa or oppera. &c. &c.

" I have been to Pompea &c. &c. and we are going next week round the Islands Corprea, Ischea, Sormenta &c. &c. We shall be a whay a little wile. I should feil pleasure in all this if you was heare, but that blessing I have not & so I must make the best of my lot. God bless you, I would write a longer letter but I am going to Paysylipo to diner & I have a conversazyeone to night & a concert. I bathe every day. I have not any irruptions & what will surprise you I am remarkably fair that every body says I put on red and wite. We have no English hear but Lord Hervey who is a lover of mine. I had a letter from Sir Thomas Rumbold last week who is coming heer in October & desired me to write him what I wanted from England & he would bring it me. I am pleased with the fate of Fitzgerald, it shews the very little partialty they have in England for the rich. In Naples he would not have suffered. We have had dreadful thunder & lightenen ; it fell at the Malteese minister just by our house & burnt is

beds & wines &c. &c. I have now perswaded Sr. Wm. to put up a conducter to his house; the lava runs a little but the mountain is very ful & we expect an irruption every day. I must stop or else I should begin & tell you my ideas of the people of Naples, in my next I will. But Greville, fleas & lice their is millions. I shall write you an Italian letter soon. God bless you. Make my compliments to your brother & all your freinds thats my freinds. Pray write to yors ever, with the truist & sincere affection.

" EMMA.

" God bless you write, my ever dear, dear Greville."

Greville was growing tired of these missives, which had as much chance of softening him as they had of writing themselves. He had told Emma as long ago as January 1782, in a letter which she still possessed, that he had never seen a woman clever enough to keep a man who was tired of her—and he was sick to death of Emma. If only he could end this useless waste of paper! Besides, it was essential for his schemes that she should do what was required of her and make Sir William happy. The time had come to take a strong line. He therefore broke his silence and wrote her a letter in which he told her bluntly to do as she was told. It crossed her letter of the 22nd of July, and drew out of her, not the snub it deserved, but the last and saddest of her love letters.

Unlike the others it started on a happy note. A letter from Greville was a treasure whatever its contents, and she had to tell him so. Then it passed to the dull apathy which was lying underneath. " I submit to what God & Greville pleases. I allways knew, I have ever had a forebodeing, since I first begun to love you, that I was not destined to be happy." And then the floodgates of her misery burst, and for awhile she dealt with the central part of his letter, wildly, despairingly, only to drop off

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gain into apathy, and at the end one last appeal. "Pray rite to me & dont write in the stile of a friend but a over, for I wont hear a word of freind, it shall be all ove & no freindship." So it ended, and then in a quick urst of temper the postscript with a final threat. "Pray rite for nothing will make me so angry & it is not to our intrest to disoblidge me, for you dont know the ower I have hear, onely I never will be his mistress. If ou affront me, I will make him marry me. God bless ou for ever."

"If you affront me"! How much was Emma willing to verlook?

Emma to Greville.

"NAPLES.

"1*st. of August*, 1786.

"I have received your letter, my dearest Greville, at ast, and you dont know how happy I am at hearing from ou, however I may like some parts of your letter, but I ont complain, it is enough I have paper that Greville as rote on, he as foldet up, he wet the wafer—happy wafer, ow I envy thee to take the place of Emmas lips, that she ould give worlds had she them, to kiss those lips, but if go on in this whay I shall be incapable of writing. I nely wish that a wafer was my onely rival, but I submit o what God & Greville pleases. I allways knew, I have ver had a forebodeing, since I first begun to love you, nat I was not destined to be happy, for their is not a King r prince on hearth that could make me happy without ou; so onely consider when I offer to live with you on ne hundred a year Sr. Wm. will give me, what can you esire, and this from a girl that a King &c. &c. is sighing or. As to what you write to me to oblidge Sr. Wm. I ill not answer you for Oh, if you knew what pain I feil reading those lines whare you advise me to W—— othing can express my rage, I am all madness. Greville, advise me, you that used to envy my smiles, now with

cooll indifferance to advise me to go to bed to him, Sr. Wm. Oh, thats worst of all, but I will not, no I will not rage for if I was with you, I would murder you & myself boath. I will leave of & try to get more strength for I am now very ill with a cold.

"I wont look back to what I wrote. I onely say I have had 2 letters in 6 months nor nothing shall ever do for me but going home to you. If that is not to be, I will except of nothing, I will go to London, their go in to every exess of vice, tell I dye a miserable broken hearted wretch & leave my fate as a warning to young whomin never to be two good, for, now you have made me love you, made me good, you have abbandoned me & some violent end shall finish our connexion if it is to finish, but, Oh Greville, you cannot, you must not give me up, you have not the heart to do it, you love me I am sure & I am willing to do everything in my power that you shall require of me & what will you have more and I onely say this the last time, I will either beg or pray, do as you like.

"I am sorry Lord Brook is dead and I am sinecerly sorry for Sr. James & Lady Peachey, but the W——k family wont mind it much. We have been 7 weeks in doupt wether he was dead or no for Sr. Wm. had a letter from Lord Warwick & he said Lord B. was better, so I suppose he must have had a relapse. Poor little boy, how I envy him his happiness. We have a deal of rain hear & violent winds, the oldest people hear never remember such a sumer, but it is luckey for us. The Queen is very poorly with a cold caught in the Villa Reale & mine is pretty much like it. We dont dine at Passylipo today on the account of my cold. We are closely besieged by the K. in a round a bout maner, he comes every Sunday to P——po but we keep the good will of the other party mentioned abbove & never gives him any encouragement. Prince Draydrixton's our constant freind, he allways enquires after you, he desires his compliments to you ; he speaks English,

he says I am a dymond of the first watter & the finest creature on hearth, he attends me to the Bath, to the walk &c. &c. &c. I have such a head ake today with my cold I dont know what to do. I shall write next post by Sr. Wm. onely I cant lett a week go without telling you how happy I am at hearing from you. Pray write as often as you can & come as soon as you can & if you come we shall all go home to England in 2 years & go throug Spain & you will like that. Pray write to me & dont write in the stile of a freind but a lover, for I wont hear a word of freind, it shall be all love & no freindship. Sr. Wm. is our freind, but we are lovers. I am glad you have sent me a Blue Hat & gloves; my hat is universaly admired through Naples. God bless you, my dear Greville, prays your ever truly and affectionate

"EMMA HART.

"*P.S.*—Pray write for nothing will make me so angry & it is not to your intrest to disoblidge me, for you dont know the power I have hear, onely I never will be his mistress. If you affront me, I will make him marry me. God bless you for ever."

(3)

Greville ignored both entreaty and threat; he was annoyed by the one and careless of the other. No reply came from him. Yet Emma still held out, and when hope of hearing from him had vanished, she made her last effort to save all that she held dear in life. She meant to return to England and plead her cause in person.

In the murky matter of her sale neither uncle nor nephew show to advantage. But once the business side was finished, Hamilton's essential superiority shone conspicuous. Greville had declared again and again that Emma would transfer her affections at the first hint of neglect, though

he knew perfectly well that it was not true. Sir William had an uneasy suspicion of the real facts, but he wanted to be hoodwinked, and can hardly be blamed for shutting his eyes. But when Emma showed the actual strength of her feelings, his treatment of her was as chivalrous as Greville's was repellent. He allowed her full scope to recapture Greville's errant fancies, and when the failure of her efforts had reduced her to counsels of despair, he even joined in smoothing the way.

For some six months now he had been loading her with attentions and luxury, hoping to wean her away from his rival. And he had failed. There were only two alternatives left—to force her or to retreat. He chose the latter, and in choosing it thought out what best would help her. If she was bent on going back to Greville, then she should go with an income of her own.

At this point we must turn back a little. When Greville was first fumbling over his proposals it suited him to pose as a tender-hearted lover struggling with adversity. He assured his uncle that if he had his own way, nothing would induce him to give up Emma, but it was not possible to continue as he was. Something must be done, and that something seemed to be a rich marriage. It was, however, his fixed determination not to let Emma suffer. "She shall never want," he declared with well-simulated passion, "and if I decide sooner than I am forced to stop from necessity, it will be that I may give her part of my pittance." She should have "near £100 a year," though it was more than he could afford and would mean selling his vertu.

So Greville affirmed while the negotiations were in progress. He went further, and on the well-worn basis of "your money back if you are not satisfied," he declared that if after trial the experiment failed, Emma could come home. But directly the bargain had been struck Greville, like a good salesman, changed his tone; there was no more

talk of sharing his last crust, or welcoming the wanderer back.

Sir William now offered to send her back with a settled income of her own. The amount was probably not great, for Hamilton, after all, was not immoderately rich; but at least it would more than cover her cost. There are few men who would finance a rival, and the fact that Hamilton made the offer is to his credit. He did more than make the offer; he wrote to Greville urging him to accept it—with Emma.

Throughout her life Emma's hopeful spirit could jump any fence, and she must have expected much from this last effort, backed as it was by Sir William's generosity; the more so as, knowing little of money at any time and less then than later, she no doubt regarded the suggested provision as far more munificent than it was. But Greville's idea of his own needs and importance lifted his expectations up to the £20,000 line, and the dowry which Emma had to offer could only have seemed a derision.

At all events he rejected the offer, scornfully and with a crushing finality. Emma might return to England if she liked, but in no circumstances could she renew her life with him. Friends they might be, if she behaved herself, but nothing more. He had washed his hands of her, and he did not propose even to be the trustee of her money. Romney could undertake that job. With her newly acquired independence she could decide whether to live in retirement or go out again into the open market. "Without any other plan," he added cynically, "she must wait events, and the difficulty will be to reject improper offers; and if a journey homewards should give a favourable one, it should not be lost; but, at any rate, she will have the good sense not to expose herself with any boy of family; she must look to from 25 to 35, and one who is his own master." This callous assumption that her true career was that of a prostitute must have been the

unkindest cut of all. Had she refused the excellent offers of Edgware Row, had she been holding out against Sir William all these months, simply to be advised not to expose herself with any boy of family ?

Yet, if we can forget Emma for a moment, we can credit Greville with something more than mere heartlessness. True, he was tired of Emma, but other men in plenty have cooled in their loves. It was not weariness that sharpened his pen, but a far more potent motive—the fear of ridicule. Greville had the misfortune of being a public character at a time when genius was almost a drug in the market. He could not hope to shine, but by a great effort he had established and kept up a reputation as a knowledgeable man of affairs ; strange as it seems, people did ask his advice. The one thing he dreaded was to make a fool of himself, when the bubble of his reputation would infallibly burst. He had not dared to propose to Lord Middleton's daughter for fear, not so much of the fact, as of the possible results of refusal. His letter had been ignored, but his attempt must have been known ; Society lived upon gossip, and every action of every member of it was public property. What sort of a figure would he cut if he pushed Emma out of England in order to marry an heiress, and a few months later published his failure to the world by bringing her back ? It was a sore and angry self-esteem rather than mere cruelty which penned that wicked letter. But however it came to be written, it did its work. Emma did not return to England, and before the end of the year had yielded to Sir William.

(4)

The transfer of Emma to Sir William was a slow, sad business, that lasted from 1783 to 1787. Though she did not know it, the years which saw the murder of her love saw also the sowing of further trouble for her in distant

lands. She had travelled east from England while another actor in her drama had travelled west. He was a naval officer, the same Captain Nelson who had nearly thrown away all for a fair Canadian face.

From Canada he had sailed to the West Indian Islands, and was sent back there after the war had come to an end. His restless mind, searching round for work to do, had lighted upon the Navigation Acts, relics of Cromwell and Charles II that still stood upon the Statute Book, and found in them that British subjects and British ships alone might trade with King George's West Indian islands. Touring from island to island, Nelson found the harbours full of American ships. A few years before they would have been the ships of British colonists; now they were the ships of successful rebels. It was no fault of Nelson's that they were not still British, and if he could help it the enemy who had won in spite of him should not have their cake as well as eat it. He peremptorily ordered the American ships out, and brought on his devoted head the fury of the West Indian islanders. Their trade was naturally with the neighbouring continent, and if Nelson had his way, they saw an end to their prosperity. Nelson's superior officers were in a quandary; they had no wish to meddle with trade or economics, and certainly did not want to annoy the islanders among whom their lot was temporarily cast. Nelson, however, had got the bit between his teeth; he had already had a brush with one of the governors. To a letter suggesting improvements in the carrying out of certain duties, the irritated governor had replied that old generals were not in the habit of taking advice from young gentlemen. Nelson retorted, "I have the honour, sir, of being as old as the Prime Minister of England." In this frame of aggressive pushfulness he had gone on his way unperturbed, and finally found himself sued for damages to the tune of £40,000. So violent was the storm that he was unable to land for fear of being arrested. At this

juncture he found a staunch ally in Mr Herbert, the President of Nevis.

Mr Herbert had a niece living with him who was a trifle older than Nelson. Her name was Frances Nesbit, and she was a widow with a small boy, Josiah, of about five. Nelson first met her some time in 1785, and in March of the next year wrote to a friend, "I think I have found a woman who will make me happy." Throughout 1786 he wrote her pleasant, calm letters. There was no fervour about them, no illusion, not much enthusiasm, and at times something that seemed rather like doubt of his own constancy. "These," he writes, "you are well convinced, are my present sentiments; God Almighty grant they may never change. Nor do I think they will; indeed there is, as far as human knowledge can judge, a moral certainty they cannot; for it must be real affection that brings us together, not interest or compulsion, which make so many unhappy." Curious, tentative language for a young lover, especially for one of Nelson's impetuous character.

By January 1787 he had pushed himself up into a higher and more rarified philosophy of love, still less in keeping with either his natural instincts or his profession as a sailor. "My love," he wrote, "is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last." He should either have left philosophy alone, or gone into it deeper. As it was he fell between two stools into the uninteresting arms of Frances Nesbit, marrying her on the 11th of March 1787.

By that time Emma had surrendered to Sir William.

CHAPTER IX

THE ROAD TO MATRIMONY

(1)

Greville's letter was a turning-point in Emma's life. Up to that moment her charm had been that rare combination of an unspoilt nature in a beautiful frame, and all the promise which that implied. Now with one swoop Greville's letter snatched away the freshness of youth and the wonder of love. Yet even so her love remained, though it was sufficiently crushed to let pride have some weight. Henceforward she made no appeal to him, though for many years to come she served his ends consciously and with unswerving devotion.

None the less there was an overwhelming sense of disillusionment, so strong and effective that it completely altered her outlook upon life. Emma's future hung by a thread. At every such crisis there is always the possibility of the victim flinging restraint to the winds; and the buffet Emma had received would almost have justified, and certainly explained, the carrying out of her threat to plunge headlong into vice. Instead, her natural goodness, unsupported by any moral principle and unaided by any example, kept her from slipping downward fast.

Very deliberately she shut the door on the past chapter of dreams and, turning to the realities of life, took stock of her position. She might follow Greville's advice—was he not "allways wright"?—but she had no need to follow him blindly. As he himself said, she had discretion and she knew perfectly well how to look after her own interests. The open market, which Greville suggested, was a place

she had trodden before, and it had landed her in the despair from which Greville had raised her. Why should she return home to it when it had nothing more to offer than she was enjoying at Naples? So the project of a return to England was dropped, and Emma yielded to Sir William.

That much was simple, but it was only a makeshift; it did not settle the course she was to pursue. If Sir William was the most obvious opportunity, he was not the most attractive. She might make the best of her beauty, living in luxury while it lasted and becoming, as she easily could, the mistress of a king.

Actually she chose a very different path, and one which was entirely praiseworthy. Love had gone; riches she ignored; the goal she set before herself was nothing less than the recovery of her lost character. When she told Greville that she would make Sir William marry her, she was not merely threatening; she was giving an honest warning of what appeared to her the only possible alternative. There is no doubt that she had the idea in mind from the moment that she was convinced of Greville's perfidy. She never lost sight of her object, and in due course she achieved it,—not without great effort, and a great effect upon her character. It meant that for years she had to play an extraordinarily difficult part. Sir William was not going to keep her indefinitely unless she yielded to him; her very efforts on Greville's behalf had convinced her of that. Therefore she had to become his mistress, so taking the one step most likely to cool his passion, and at the same time she had not merely to retain his affections, but also to increase his respect for her. Added to that, she had to fit herself for the position of an ambassador's wife. The society of ladies, where she might have hoped to learn at least the outward seeming, was barred to her, and the men whom she met in profusion knew her position and treated her accordingly. How difficult the task proved she betrayed in a burst of confidence to Romney shortly after

her marriage. "Tell Hayly," she wrote, "I am allways reading his Triumphs of Temper. It was that that made me Lady H., for God knows I had for 5 years enough to try my temper, and I am affraid, if it had not been for the good example Serena taught me, my girdle would have burst, and if it had, I had been undone, for Sir William more minds temper than beauty."

(2)

Having made her choice, Emma set about the task with a steady determination. She never did anything half-heartedly. In an age of affectation and surrounded by a batch of dilettantes, she was the embodiment of enthusiasm, and her enthusiasm was such that she could even infuse it into that standing and waiting which Milton found so hard. In Greville's hands she had curbed all her natural qualities, taking on the type of secular quietism which he admired. She had been able to do it, because the loss of all other ambitions was compensated by the discovery of love. Now she had to make a far-off aspiration compensate her for the loss of love.

There still exist letters which she wrote to Sir William about this time—December 1786 and January 1787. They are her new love letters, and many a young married wife has written less warmly. Sir William had no cause to complain; all that Emma could transfer to him she did. Yet for all their outward seeming there is a vast difference between them and her early letters to Greville. Emma perhaps hardly realised the difference. She had a very genuine affection for Sir William, which was of long standing. She was quite sincere about it but it was not love, and when she tried to move her fingers over the old strings, she could not recapture her first fine careless rapture. It was not the will that was lacking but the fact. For all her effort, the inherent honesty of her heart gave a different

flavour to these later letters. Sir William did not know—how should he ? but we who have both series can compare and note the falling off.

Not that the second series lack charm ; in a way they have much more, but of a new type. She was no longer wrapt up in a single object, and one so barren as Greville. In these letters she had the passing show of life to draw upon, that varied kaleidoscopic life of Naples, and her lively, vivacious pen poured out the gossip of the day in graphic pictures.

It is when she passes from the outside world to herself that the difference strikes home. At first there were touches of hesitation and defiance that gradually gave way to a self-complacency which never could have crept into the simple tale of love unfolded to Greville. In the very first letter she hesitates to write for fear a servant might think " I was so much in love I could not be 3 days without sending to you." And she adds half-defiantly, " but lett them think if he will."

Instead of the simplicity of love there is a tendency to exaggerate. She had written years before to Greville, " Pray, my dear Greville, do lett me come home as soon as you can for I am all most broken hearted being from you, endead I have no pleasure nor happiness." That speaks volumes more than the stilted version which Sir William received, " Love as its pleasures and its pains ; for instance, yesterday when you went a whey from me, I thought all my heart and soul was torn from me, and my greif was excessive I assure you." It would never have occurred to her that any grief at parting from Greville could be excessive, still less that it was necessary to assure him of the fact. There is a certainty which carries its own conviction, and it was that certainty which Emma had lost.

But there is a change in these letters which is far more fundamental. To Greville she had given a spiritual love, which included body and soul ; for Sir William she had

nothing left but a sexless affection and her body. The more carnal aspect peeps out repeatedly. It is significant that the humble desire to become like Greville changes to a complacent satisfaction in her physical beauty. She still realised that she could "improve," and in fact she worked harder to that end than before; but it was no part of her policy to emphasise her failings. So she writes to Sir William, "I am a pretty whoman, and one can't be everything at once; but now I have my wisdom teeth I will try to be ansome and reasonable." This more masterful attitude pervades the whole atmosphere. When they are parted, for all her assurances of excessive grief, it is Sir William that is to be pitied. "I hope," she writes, "you will every day have luck [in your sport] to repay you for the loss of my kisses," which may be compared with her heart-broken reply to Greville's final letter, "but I won't complain, it is enough I have paper that Greville as wrote on, he as foldet up, he wet the wafer—happy wafer, how I envy thee to take the place of Emma's lips, that she would give worlds had she them, to kiss those lips." And at the thought of Sir William's return she no longer thrills with her own love, but refers to his pleasures: "I shall be most happy to see you at home, to warm you with my kisses, and comfort you with my smiles and good humour, and oblidge you by my attentions."

It would never have occurred to her to paint her own perfections for Greville, as she does for Sir William in the following extract: "I was at Caletalino's [an artist] today. She will make a very great likeness and very pretty it will be. It shall not be too naked, for it would not be so interesting, and as you will have it in a box, it will be seen a good deal, and wile you can even more than see the originals, others may guess at them, for the are sacred to all but you, and I wish the wos better for your sake. But I should not know how to mend them if I could tho' you don't like sugar loaves."

Even when she was not referring directly to the delight which Sir William would feel in her beauty, she was constantly describing the effect which she had on others. Partly, of course, it was genuine pleasure in admiration—she had done the same to Greville—but it was also part of her scheme. She had to make herself indispensable to Sir William, and she tried two methods—making him as comfortable as possible, and keeping alive his appreciation of her charms. The sad thing was that her policy fed her natural vanity, and what began as a means to an end tended more and more to merge into the end itself. She grew greedy of praise, and this paved the way to her great failure.

A selection of the letters will not only enable a comparison to be drawn, but will also give, in her own words, some idea of her manner of life.

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"CASERTA,
"*26th December*, 1786.

"Pray don't scold me for writing to you, for endead I can't help it, and I should have been ashamed to have wrote to you without an excuse for doing it, therefore Smith as returned the letter I sent to town, and I told Cottier that I would send it you, or else he might think I was so much in love I could not be 3 days without sending to you. But lett them think if he will; certain it is I love you sincerely and endead I am appreensive two much for my own quiet, but lett it be. Love as its pleasures and its pains; for instance, yesterday when you went a whey from me, I thought all my heart and soul was torn from me, and my greif was excessive I assure you; today I am better, perche the day after tomoro is friday and then I shall have you with me to make up for past pain. I shall have much pleasure and comfort, and my mind tells me you will have much pleasure to come home to me again,

and I will setle you and comfort you. Pray excuse this scrall, for I expect Garly and I have wrote in a great hurry. Don A and Hackert and Garly was here yesterday night. I saw Greffer yesterday, and he said he would come this evening to play wist, but I would rather play this evening at *all fours* with you ;—Oh ! I forgot, cribige is our game, it's all the same, you like crib. Adio, my dear Sir William ; laying jokes aside, there is nothing I assure you can give me the least comfort tell you come home. I shall receive you with smiles, affection and good humer, and think had I the offer of crowns I would refuse them and except you, and I don't care if all the world knows it. If sometimes I am out of humer, forgive me, tell me, put me in a whey to be grateful to you for your kindness to me, and in a little time all faults will be corrected. I am a pretty whoman, and one can't be everything at once ; but now I have my wisdom teeth I will try to be ansome and reasonable. God bless you, my ever dear friend etc. etc. etc. etc., and believe me yours and onely yours for ever sincerly."

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"NAPLES,
"*5th January*, 1787.

"I shall begin to write to you tonight for the post goes of so early in the morning that we are scarce out of bed, and of a evening I am alone after 7 a clock and I feel it a pleasure to wright to you. Mr King and Lady Lanesborough is gone of and nobody can tell as yet how the got a passport ; . . . the owe your taylor ninety ducats, besides General Acton's cook and many other people, and Tierney, Clark, etc. etc. etc. In short, there innumerable villanys is more than I am able to recount to you. . . .

"Satturday morning : . . . Gatty has had it from a whoman abbout Court that the queen is very dissatisfied with the Dutches of G. [Gloucester] for her pride and her

imprudent taulk. She told the queen that when she was at Millan her son was quite in love with the Archdutches, and in every corner every day was kissing her when her father and mother was in England and on their tour, and likewise the Archduches was in love with the Prince, and would kiss his lips and smack them, and they was much together. So the queen said to her whomen, what kind of people must the A.D. have abbout her in the absence of her parents, and she did not understand kissing there lips and all that, and it was a pitty but her people was removed. . . . The French Ambassador had his house on fire last night; one room was very much on fire, and if they had not got timely assistance it would have gone bad with them.

"I have just recd. your kind letter. I am glad you had such sport. I wish I had been at your post, I sd. like to see you shoot, tho' I am afraid I sd. have two much compassion. But I hope you will every day have luck to repay you for the loss of my kisses. God bless you, my dearest dear Sir W., and believe me yours, more than my own or any person's else, sincerely and affectionately."

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"Naples, *Sunday night* (*7th of January*), '87.

"Endead, my Sir William, I am angry. I told you one line would satisfie me, and when I have no other comfort then your letters, you should not so cruely disapoint me; for I am unhappy, and I don't feil right without hearing from you, and I won't forgive you; no, that I won't. It is a very cold night, and I am just returned from Hart's. . . . I sett next to Hart, who would help me to every thing, and poor man could not see, but to the best of his power paid me a number of compliments, and produced me as a specimen of English beauty. After diner he fetched an Italian song, that was made on Lady Sophi Jenner (?) forty

years past, and he had translated it to English and would sing it; and when he came to dymond eyes and pearl teeth, he looked at me and bid the others look at me; and he is going to dedicate the English to me, and oh! you can't think, just as if he could see me and as if I was the most perfect beauty in the world. Endead, I heard the Abbe say to the others I was perfectly beautiful and elegantly behaved in my manners and conversation. And so the all admired me. But Hart is quite gone. He is come to see me tonight. Poor Tierney is very poorly.

"Monday morning: Oh, thank you, my dear Sir William, for your letter. Endead, I forgive you and am sorry I scolded you. The wind made me so sleepy that I slept till eight a clock, and was fast asleep when Vinchenzo brought your letter, and I read it in bed, and give it a good hug. But I wished you had been there. But I give it a kiss or 2. But I hope you will believe me sencere when I write to you; for endead, everything flows from my heart, and I cannot stop it. I am glad you had some good sport. I should like to see that that is 200 weight, for it must be a fine one; but the other 2, that got of wounded, the must be somewere in great pain. . . ."

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"*Monday night, Jany the 8th*, 1787.

"My dear Sir Wm.

. . . . . .

"Showrawky [Skavrouska] gives a diner to-moro to all his musick people, even the harpscord tuner, at Torre-del-Greco. All the Caletalinos go there, and I fancy there will be a fine mess of them altogether, for I don't hear of any body of fashion that is going. But he will be master of the Band, and the will flatter him, and he will be in his kingdom come. It is a pitty he is so od, for I believe he as a good heart. He has given Hackert the finest new sattin dress lined with

sable besides a hundred guines a-pece for 2 little pictures that I should think twenty enough for them, for I am of your opinion, I would pay for good things, but not for bad ones, and the are pretty but not fine painting."

. . . . . .

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"*Wednesday, Jany the* 10*th*, 1787.

"My dear Sir Wm.

"I had hardly time to thank you for your kind letter of this morning as I was buisy prepairing for to go on my visit to the Convent of S. Romita; and endead I am glad I went, tho' it was a short visit. But tomorrow I dine with them in full assembly. I am quite charmed with Beatrice Acquaviva. Such is the name of the charming whoman I saw to-day. Oh, Sir William, she is a pretty whoman. She is 29 years old. She took the veil at twenty, and does not repent to this day, though, if I am a judge of physiognomy, her eyes does not look like the eyes of a nun. They are allways laughing, and something in them vastly alluring, and I wonder the men of Naples would suffer the only pretty whoman who is realy pretty to be shut in a convent. But it is like the mean-spirited ill taste of the Neapolitans. I told her I wondered how she would be lett to hide herself from the world, and I dare say thousands of tears was shed, the day she deprived Naples of one of its greatest ornaments. She answered with a sigh, that endead numbers of tears was shed, and once or twice her resolution was allmost shook, but a pleasing comfort she felt at regaining her friends, that she had been brought up, and religious considerations strengthened her mind, and she parted with the world with pleasure, and since that time one of her sisters had followed her example, and another—which I saw—was preparing to enter soon. But neither of her sisters is so beautiful as her, tho' the are booth

very agreable. But I think Beatrice is charming, and I realy feil for her an affection. Her eyes, Sir William, is I dont know how to describe them. I stopt one hour with them, and I had all the good things to eat, and I promise you they don't starve themselves. But there dress is very becoming, and she told me that she was allowed to wear rings and mufs and any little thing she liked, and endead she displayed today a good deal of finery, for she had 4 or 5 dimond rings on her fingers, and seemed fond of her muff. She has excelent teeth, and shows them, for she is allways laughing. She kissed my lips, cheeks and forehead, and every moment exclaimed 'charming fine creature,' admired my dress, said I looked like an angel, for I was in Clear wite dimity and a blue sash. She admired my hat and fine hair, and she said she had heard I was good to the poor, and generous and nobleminded. 'Now,' she says, it would be worth wile to live for such a one as you. Your good heart would melt at any trouble that befel me, and partake of one's greef or be equaly happy at one's good fortune. But I never met with a freind yet, or I ever saw a person I could love tell now, and you shall have proofs of my love.' In short I sat and listened to her, and the tears stood in my eyes, I don't know why; but I loved her at that moment. I thought what a charming wife she would have made, what a mother of a family, and what a freind, and the first good and amiable whoman I have seen since I came to Naples for to be lost to the world—how cruel! She give me a sattin pocketbook of her own work, and bid me think of her, when I saw it and was many miles far of; and years hence when she peraps should be no more, to look at it, and think the person that give it had not a bad heart. Did not she speak very pretty? but not one word of religion; but I shall be happy today, for I shall dine with them all, and come home at night. It is a beautiful house and garden, and the attention of them was very pleasing. There is sixty whomen and all well-looking, but

not like the fair Beatrice. 'Oh Emma,' she says to me, 'the brought here the vieve minister's wife, but I did not like the looks of her at first. She was little, short, pinchd-face, and I receved her cooly. How different from you, and how surprised was I in seeing you tall in statue. We may read your heart in your countenance, your complexion, in short, your figure and features is rare, for you are like the marble statues I saw, when I was in the world.' I think she flattered me up, but I was pleased. Thursday morning: I have just receved your kind letter, and I am pleased and content that you should write to me, tho' it is onely one or two lines a day. Be assured I am grateful. I am sorry you had bad sport, and I shall be most happy to see you at home, to warm you with my kisses, and comfort you with my smiles and good humer, and oblidge you by my attentions, which will be the constant pleasure of, my Dear Sir William, your truly affectionate EMMA.

"*P.S.*—Cuny's duty to you, and thanks abbout the Marquis Sesos. (You may look big upon it.)"

Emma to Sir William Hamilton.

"(*January* (*? 18th*) 1787)

"NAPLES; *Thursday morning.*

"Oh, my dearest Sir William, I have just received your dear sweet letter. It has charmed me. I don't know what to say to you to thank you in words kind enough. . . . Gallucci played solo some of my solfegos and you whold have thought he would have gone mad. He says he had heard a great deal of me. But he never saw or heard of such a whoman before. He says when he first came in, I frightened him with a Majesty and Juno look that I receved him with. Then he says that whent of on being more aquainted, and I enchanted him by my politeness and the maner in which I did the honors, and then I made him allmost cry with Handels; and with the comick he could

not contain himself, for he says he never saw the tragick and comick muse blended so happily together. He says Gosrich would have been delighted with me. I supose he makes today a fine work all over Naples. But your ideas of him are the same as mine. We boath think alike of him. He taulks too much for me.

"I hope you have received the letter and news I sent you yesterday. I told you Gatty is here. He is enchanted with me. He says I sing to please him better than anybody. He says the progress I make, he could not have believed. He sat and listened with so much pleasure, and his neice was very much pleased. . . ."

(3)

Without losing one jot of the pleasures which Sir William was able and anxious to give her, Emma played her cards with uncommon skill. At first she turned her attention solely to fixing Sir William's affections, and her success can be measured by a comparison of two letters which Sir William wrote to Greville. In February 1787, shortly after she had yielded, he said quite briefly, "Our dear Em. goes on now quite as I cou'd wish, improves daily, and is universally beloved. She is wonderful, considering her youth and beauty." At the end of the year he wrote, "You can have no idea of the improvement she makes daily in every respect—manners, language and musick particularly." Then follows a pæan of praise. Her voice is so remarkable that "there is no saying what she may be in a year or two. I believe myself of the first rate, and so do the best judges here." Her behaviour is almost equally wonderful; it has acquired her "many sensible admirers," and though the society in which she moved was strictly male, yet "all the female nobility, with the Queen at their head, shew her every distant civility." Sir William was obviously impressed.

Meanwhile, as each new position was consolidated, Emma looked round for fresh avenues of advancement. There were two methods she could adopt—her own improvement and the establishment of a reputation in society.

As for the former, she applied herself assiduously to every form of accomplishment. She began to sketch, which is not an art to be lightly taken up at twenty-two years of age, and yet she made tolerable progress. She picked up French and Italian with ease and rapidity, conversing in them before the end of the year. Above all she showed an extraordinary aptitude for singing, which with the perfecting of her Attitudes made her an admirable entertainer.

Her reputation in society was another matter, and meant a very uphill task. Naples was even more lax in its moral code than England, but even in Naples the position of mistress carried a stigma. Emma could not hope at the outset for more than male society, and she had to deal with the men in such a way as to keep them at her feet without damaging her already equivocal reputation. More than that, by her handling of them she had at once to convince Sir William of her attractiveness and win her way through to the ladies. Her efforts were masterly. Apart from Sir William himself, not a breath of scandal attached to her. On the contrary, the time was not far distant when the rumour spread that she was secretly married to the man she so faithfully served ; there seemed no other explanation. The insinuations and blandishments of the men were met by such good-humoured chaffing and skilful evasion that they became at once more respectful and more deeply entangled. By slow degrees doors began to be opened to her, and Sir William aided the process by refusing to entertain, or be entertained by, those who showed her incivility.

The correspondence of this year gives evidence of the steady progress Emma made. As early as March the Duke of Gloucester was asking to be introduced. In July she

and Sir William spent ten days with an Italian Duke at Sorrento, and in August ten days with a Countess. The nobility were beginning to welcome her to their houses, and she already had the friendship of a Madame Venvatelli, a lady of the Court.

As for the manner of her life, it can best be described in her own words. During the four months, August to December 1787, she wrote a long, journal-like letter for Greville's benefit, describing her triumphs and the visits she paid.

Emma to Greville.

"Napoli.

"*Agosto* 4 (1787).

"Alltho you never think me worth writing to, yet I cannot so easily forget you and when ever I have had any particular pleasure, I feil as tho I was not right tell I had communicated it to my dearest Greville, for you will ever be dear to me and tho we cannot be to gether, lett ous corespond as freinds. I have a happiness in hearing from you and a comfort in communicating my little storieys to you, because I flatter myself that you still love the name of that Emma that was once very dear to you, and, but for unfortunate evels might still have claimed the first place in your affections, and I hope still you will never meet with any person that will use you ill, but never will you meet with the sincere love that I shew'd you, dont expect it for you canot meet with it, but I have done, onely think of my words, you will meet with more *evels* than *one* as Sir Wm. says, that one is the devile. We have been to Sorrento on a visit at the Duke Saint de Maitre for ten days. We are just returned, but I never passed a happier ten days, except Edg—re R—d. In the morning we bathed and returned to a fine sumer house where we breakfasted. But first this sumer house is on a rock over the sea that looks over Caprea, Ischea, Procheda, Vesuva, Porticea, Paysilipo, Naples &c. &c. &c. & the sea all before ous, that you have

no idea of the beauties of it. From this little Paridise, after breakfast we vewd the lava running down 3 miles of Vesuvua and every now & then black clouds of smoak rising in to the air, had the most magnificent apearance in the world. I have made some drawings from it, for I am so used to draw now, it is as easey as a.b.c. For when we are at Naples we dine every day at Villa Emma at Paysilipo and I make 2 or 3 drawings. Sir William laughs at me and says I shall rival him with the mountains now. After breakfast I had my singing lession for Sir Wm. as took a mutton [musician] in to the house, but he is one of the best masters in Italia ; after my lesson we rode on asses all about the Country, paid visits & dined at 3 and after diner saild about the coast, returned & dress'd for the conversazioni. We had Sir Wm's band of musick with ous, and about dark the concert in one room and I satt in a nother & received all the nobility who came every night whilst we was there and I sung generally 2 searrous songs & 2 bufos, the last night I sang fifteen songs, one was a recatitive from a opera at St. Carlos, the begining was Luci belle sio vadoro, the finest thing you ever heard, that for ten minutes after I sung it, their was such a claping that I was oblidged to sing it over again, and I sung after that one with a tambourin in the character of a young girl with a raire-shew, the pretiest thing you ever heard, in short, I left the people at Sorrento with their heads turned. I left some dying, some crying & some in despair. Mind you theis was all nobility as proud as the Devil, but we humbled them. But what astonished them, was that I should speak such good Italian, for I paid them, I spared non of them, tho I was civil and oblidged every body, one asked me if I had left a love at Naples that I left them so soon. I pulld my lip at him, so says I, pray do you take me to be an Italian whoman that as four or five differant men to attend her. Look Sir, I am English, I have one cavelere servant & I have brought him with me, pointing

to Sir Wm; but he never spoke a nother word after for before he had been offering him self as cavelere servante. He said I was una donna rara. We are going up Vesuvua to night, as there is a large eruption, and the lava runs down allmost to Porticea; the mountain looks beautiful. One part their is nothing but cascades of liquid fire, lava I mean, red hot, runs in to deep cavern that it is beautiful, but I fancy we shall have some very large eruption soon, as large as that of 67; I wish we may. We dine to day at 2 a clock, so sett of at four. We shall get on our asses at Porticea and arrive at the top just at dark & so be at Naples abbout 2 a clock to morrow morning. Sir Wm. is very fond of me & very kind to me; the house is ful of painters painting me. He as now got nine pictures of me & 2 a painting. Marchant is cuting my head in stone, that is in camea for a ring, there is a nother man modeling me in wax & another in clay. All the artists is come from Rome to study from me that Sir Wm. as fitted up a room that is calld the painting room. Sir Wm. is never a moment from me. He goes no whare without me, he as no diners, but what I can be of the party, no body comes with out the are civil to me; we have allways good company. I now live up stairs in the same apartments whare he lives and my old apartments is made the musick rooms whare I have my lessions in the morning & our house at Caserta is fitting up elaganter this year, a room making for my musick and a room fitting up for my master as he goes with ous. Sir Wm. says he loves nothing but me, likes no person to sing but me and takes delight in all I do and all I say so we are happy.

"Sunday morning. We was last night up Vesuvus at twelve a clock and in my life I never saw so fine a sight. The lava runs a bout five mile down from the top, for the mountain is not burst as ignorant people says it is, but when we got up to the Hermitage there was the finest fountain of liquid fire falling down a great precipice & as it run down it sett fire to the trees and brush wood so that

the mountain looked like one entire mountain of fire. We saw the lava suround the poor Hermits house & take possesion of the chapel not withstanding it was coverd with pictures of saints & other religios preservitaves against the fury of nature. For me I was inraptured. I could have staid all night there & I have never been in charity with the moon since for it looked so pale & sickly & the red hot lava served to light up the moon for the light of the moon was nothing to the lava. We met the Prince Royal on the mountain, but is foolish tuters onely took him up a little whay & did not lett him stay 3 minuets, so when we asked him how he liked it he said Bella ma poca roba when if the had took him five hundred yards higher he would have seen the noblest sublimest sight in the world, but poor creatures, the where frightened out of their sences & glad to make a hasty retreat. O I shall kill myselfe with laughing. Their has been a prince paying ous a visit. He is sixty years of age, one of the first familes here and as allways lived at Naples & when I told him I had been to Caprea he asked me if I went their by land; onely think what ignorance. I staired at him and asked who was his tutor.

"I left of in a hurry and as not wrote this ten days as we have been on a visit to the Countess Mahoney at Ische 9 days and are just returned from their. We went in a hired vessel & took all Sr. Wms. musicians, my harpsicord & master, 4 servants & my maid. I think I never had such a pleasent voyage any where. The Countess came down to the sea shore to meet ous, she took me in her arms & kissed me, thankd Sr. Wm. for bringing her the company of so beautiful & lovely whoman. She took ous to her house where there was a full conversazione & tho I was in a undress, onely having on a muslin chemise very thin, yet the admiration I met with was surprising. The Countess made me set by her & seemed to have pleasure to distinguish me by every mark of attention & the all

allowd the never had seen such a belissima creatura in all their life. I spoke Italian to most all, a little French to some that spoke to me in French. The oblidged me to sing but I got such aplause that for ten minuets you could not hear a word. I sung four songs, two Rondos, a Duetto, & a bravoro song of St. Carlos. The countess gave a great diner the day after to the noblesse of the place whare I was & in the evening an accadema of musick, where there was others sung, but I gott all the aplause again. I sung one little Italian air that the all cried, but one priest that whas their was so in love with me that Sir William was oblidged to give him my picture in a snuff box & he carries the snuff box in his breast: this is a preist mind you. So everyday we stayd we had parties of pleasure & the poor Countess cried when we came a whay & I am now setting for a picture for her in a turkish dress, very pretty. I must tell you I have had great offers to be the first whoman in the Italian opera at Madrid where I was to have six thousand pound for 3 years, but I would not engage as I should not like to go in to Spain with out I knew people their & I could not speak their language, so I refused it & a nother reason was that Galini as been hear from the opera house at London to engage people & tho I have not been persuaded to make a written engagement, I ceartainly shall sing at the Pantheon & Hanover Square, except something perticuler happens for Galini says he will make a subscription concert for me if I wont engage for the Opera, but I wishd to consider of it before I engage. Sir William says he will give me leave to sing at Hanover Square on the condition Galini as proposed, which is 2 thousand pounds. Sir William as took my master in to the house & pays him a great price on purpose that he shall not teach any other person. Their was some of the oficers in Captain Finches ship that came to our concert whare I sung; they says Miss Hamilton is a fool in singing in comparison, & so says Sir William, but I dont know; it is a most extra-

oirdary thing that my voice is totaly alterd, it is the finest soprana you ever heard, that Sir William shuts his eyes & think one of the Castratos is singing & what is most extraordinary that my shake or tril, what do you call it, is so very good in every note, my master says that if he did not feil & see & no that I am a substance, he would think I was an angel. I have now gone through all difficculties. I solfega at first sight & in reccatative famous. Sir William is in raptures with me ; he spares neither expence nor pains in any thing. Our house at Caserta is all new fitted up for me, a new room for my master, a musick room for me. I have my French master, I have the Queens dancing master 3 times a week, I have 3 lessons in singing a day, morning eight a clock, before dinner & the evening & people makes enterest to come & hear me; my master goes to England with ous & then I give up one hour in the day to reading the Italian, their is a person comes a purpose & for all this their is now five painters & 2 modlers at work on me for Sir Wm. & their is a picture of me going to the Empress of Russia, but Sir William as the phaeton at the door after I have had my first singing lesson & dancing & he drives me out for 2 hours & you will say thats right, for as I study a deal, it is right I should have excercise, but last night I did do a thing very extraordinary. We gave yesterday a deplomatic diner, so after diner I gave them a concert, so I sent the coach & my compliments to the Banti who is first whoman at St. Carlos & desired her to come & sing at my concert, so she came & their was near sixty people, so after the first quartett I was to sing the first song ; at first I was in a little fright before I begun, for she is a famous singer & she placed herself close to me, but when I begun all fear whent a whay & I sung so well that she cried out, just God, what a voice, I would give a great deal for your voice; in short, I met with such aplause that it allmost turned my head. The Banti sung one song after me and I assure you every body said I sung in a finer stile

than her. Poor Sir Wm. was so inraptured with me, for he was afraid I should have been in a great fright and it was of consequence that evening for he wanted to shew me of to some Dutch officers that was there, that is with a sixty gun ship & a frigate. The Comodore whoes name is Melvile was so inchanted with me that tho he was to depart the next day, he put it of & give me a diner on board that nealy surpasses all description. First Sr. Wm. me & mother went down to the mole where the long boat was waiting, all mand so beautiful, their was a comodore & the Captain & four more of the first officers waited to conduct ous to the ship. The 2 ships was dresd out so fine in all the collours, the men all put in order a band of musick & all the marrine did their duty & when we went on board twenty peices of canon fired, but as we past the frigate she fired all her guns that I wish you had seen it; we sett down thirty to dine, me at the head of the table, mistress of the feast, drest all in virgin wite & my hair all in ringlets reaching all most to my heals. I assure you it is so long that I realy lookd and moved an angel, Sir Wm. said so. That night their was a great opera at St. Carlos in honor of the King of Spains name day, so St. Carlos was illumanated and every body in great galla. Well, I had the finest dress made up on purpose as I had a box near the K & Queen. My gown was purple sattin, wite sattin peticoat trimd with crape & spangles, my cap lovely from Paris, all wite fethers, my hair was to have been delightfully dressd as I have a very good hair dresser, but for me unfortunately, the diner on board did not finish tell half past five English, then the Comodore & Sr. Wm. would have a nother bottle to drink to the Belle ocche of the loveliest whoman in the world as the cald me. At last, I wisperd to Sr. Wm. and told him I should be angry with him if he did not gett up to go as we was to dress & it was necessary to be at the theatre before the royal party so at last the put out the boat, so after a salute from the 2 ships of all the guns

we arrived on shoar with the Comodore & five princapal officers and in we all crowd in to one coach which is large. We just got in time to the opera, the Comodore went with ous and the officers came next and attended my box all the time and behaved to me as tho I was a Queen.

"You must know this letter as been begun abbove 4 months and I have wrote a little at a time & I now finish from Caserta where we have been five weeks. We go to Naples the 28 of this month December and stay the Carnaval their & then return to this place. I believe we shall have a great erruption soon for tho we are here 16 miles from Naples yet yesterday the mountain made such a dreadful noise just like cannons in ones ears. Sir William & me was yesterday as endead we are every day at the Queens Garden and wilst Mr. Greffer & me ware talking all of a sudin their rose such a black collums of smoke out of Vesuvus attended with such roaring that I was frightened and last night I went on the leads of our house hear and the throughs was such that I could see Naples by the light of the fire very plain and after the throughs the red hot cinders fell all over the mountain. The Caviliere Gatty who arrived here yesterday & is come to stay with ous a week says the day before yesterday he spoke with Padre Antoine a old preist, who lives on the mountain, who told him that in a week or fortenight a mouth would open the Portice side and carry all that place a whay, but at least their is bad signs now. I took last night one of my maids who is a great biggot to the top of the house & I shewd her the mountain but when she saw the great fire she fell down on her knees & cried out, O Janaro mio, Antoino mio, so I fel down on my knees and cried out O Saint Loola mio Loola mio, but she got up in a great hurry & said ebene signora la vostro excellenza non credo in St. Janaro evero, so sais I, no teresa evero per me Io credo se voi prega all Loola mia Septeso Cosa. She lookt at me and said to be sure I read a great many books & must know more than

her, but says she, does not God favour you more than ous, no says I. O God says she, your excellency is very ungrateful, he as been so good as to make your face the same as he made the Blessed Virgins and you dont esteem it as a favour. Why says I, did you ever see the virgin, O yes says she, you are like every picture that their is of her & you know the people at Iscea fel down on their knees to you & begd you to grant them favours in her name, & Greville, its true that the have all got it in their heads I am like the virgin & the do come to beg favours of me. Last night their was two preists came to our house & Sir William made me put the shawl over my head & look up & the preist burst in to tears & kist my feet & said God had sent me a purpose. O propo, now as I have such a use of shawls & mine is wore out Sir Wm. is quite miserable for I stand in atitudes with them on me. As you know Mr. Machpherson ask him to give you one for me, pray do, for mine is wore out. O pray send me 4 or 5 prints of that little Gipsey picture with the hat on; Sir Wm. wants one and 2 other people I have promised. Thank you for the boxes, I was enchanted with the hats, the black one was two little but I have give it to Madam Venvatelli, a freind of mind hear at Court, who admired it. Sir Wm. scolds me for writing so long a letter; Mind you, your Uncle Freds daughter cant sing so well as me, tell her so. Pray write to me & tell me if I shall sing at the opera or no. We shall be in London this Spring twelve months; we are going to Rome this spring. Adio & believe me more your freind than what you are mine.

"EMMA.

"I send you a kiss on my name, its more than you deserve. Next post I write to your brother abbout Wite, as he is my freind and I have assisted them a good deal & will more. Pray give my love to your brother & compliments to Legg, Banks, Tolemach &c. &c. & tell them to

take care of their hearts when I come back; as to you, you will be uterly undone but Sr. Wm. allready is distractedly in love & endead I love him tenderly. He deserves it. God bless you."

(4)

One of the charges brought against Emma by the more scandalous memoirs is that she ruined all her lovers by her extravagance. It is an undoubted fact that in her later life she ran badly into debt; it is also true that while she lived with Fetherstonehaugh she was careless of the money which that very rich young baronet showered upon her. But it is not in the least true that up to this moment she had so much as begun to ruin any one with whom she had been in contact. Fetherstonehaugh was too rich to be ruined even by his own stupid courses,[1] and we know the cheese-paring of Greville's establishment. But if Emma was clear of responsibility, the fate which pursued her had an awkward habit of devouring her lovers' finances. Greville's misfortunes have been traced; it was now Sir William's turn. Partly his troubles sprang out of his partiality for Emma, and partly out of his partiality for Greville.

As Emma remarked in her letter, her old apartments at the Palazzo Sessa were turned into music rooms, and the house at Caserta was fitted up in a magnificent style. All this building and alteration cost more money than Sir

[1] To take a last peep at this sometime lover, Lady Blessington wrote to Lord Granville in 1799 (eighteen years after Emma had "ruined" him): "What company will you find at Up Park? Is it merely gourmandise and the hope of gain that allure you? Sir Henry himself can have no attraction but his cook and his money, for he is, I believe, the greatest goose that ever existed." He seems in fact to have come of an unfortunate family, for his uncle was described by Fanny Burney as "a middle-aged gentleman, who, having broken his leg, walks upon crutches. He is equally ugly and cross."

William expected. As he wrote ruefully, "The fitting up my new appartment cost me much more than I thought it wou'd—near £4000."

But the main source of his troubles was to be Greville's schemes for Milford Haven. The difficulties came slowly because Sir William was always holding back; but they came very surely owing to Greville's indomitable perseverance, itself the outcome of his own misfortunes. Toward the end of 1787 Sir William told him frankly that "had I money in hand I would not scruple entering upon your *grand plan*, but as I have not, having laid out what I had in Ross and Ogilvie's hands by making my present residence delightfull, I cannot lay out much ready money without inconveniencing myself."

Foiled in this direction, Greville once more tried speculative building. The results may be inferred from his remark towards the end of the year, "my situation is daily more critical." A fresh blow was to follow. Greville had, one way or another, fallen foul of his brother, who consequently withdrew his aid in the elections of 1789, and Greville found himself not only out of office, but out of Parliament as well. In these depressing circumstances he refurbished his plan of living at his uncle's expense, setting out his proposals at greater length and in a more urgent form. His eagerness led him too far, so that even the simple-minded diplomatist at Naples saw through him. "I daresay," he replied with more than his usual vigour, "all you propose, such as the Act of Parliament and buildings and exchanges wou'd be greatly to the advantage of the Estate in process of time, but it is by no means convenient to me to run myself into debt and difficulties for a prospect of future advantages to be enjoy'd—by whom? I am not selfish, and wou'd certainly sacrifice a little for the hope of benefitting the man I love best when I am gone, but your plan seems to be very extensive, and of course must be attended with considerable expense. I

have desired Meyrick, as I do you, to put yourselves in my situation, and to do for me as you wou'd do for yourselves were you in the same situation."

Greville took this letter as authority to proceed, and introduced a Bill into Parliament—probably to give Milford Haven a status as a port, with power to levy dues, etc. The Bill was soon passed into an Act, of which Sir William with rather pathetic helplessness said, "Tho' I do not understand thoroughly the nature of the act of Parliament you have passed for me, yet I see enough that it may be attended with great consequences; the whole question *to me* is whether I shall live to be benefitted by them, or whether great present disbursements must not be made in order to ensure future success; but of all this we may talk on the spot as I hope next summer."

The actual consequences will be described later.

(5)

Meanwhile, as the months went by and the Italian nobility began to accept her, Emma felt that the time had arrived to press her views with Sir William. They were received with mixed feelings, and led to scenes. "Hitherto," Sir William confided to his nephew, "her behaviour is irreproachable, but her temper, as you must know, unequal." However, now that Sir William was in full possession of her views, Emma realised with uncommon penetration that her best course was to leave the idea to fructify of itself.

At first Sir William had serious thoughts of breaking with her. "If ever a separation should be necessary," he wrote, "for our mutual happiness, I would settle £150 a year on her, and £50 on her mother, who is a very worthy woman; but all this is only thinking aloud to you, and foreseeing the difference of 57 and 22 may produce events." Yet even at this early stage his feelings were obviously

perplexed; he feared that "her views are beyond what I can bring myself to execute," but he was quite sure that "she would be welcome to share with me, *on our present footing*, all I have during my life," and he dwelt with obvious satisfaction on the thought that "her conduct is such as to gain universal esteem." More significant to anyone acquainted with his easy-going, pliant nature is the admission in the same letter, though in a totally different connection, that "she is so good, there is no refusing her." Still more significant is the postscript, "I seriously propose making you a visit next spring, as you know my affairs require my presence; how we shall manage about Emma is another question; however, I only trouble myself at present with making her accomplished, let what may come of it."

That was early in 1789. The next spring he did not come to England because he had not yet made up his mind to give way to Emma's wishes, and she had no intention of letting him go, merely to be strengthened in his resolve not to marry her. So she pleaded the need of his presence to help her with her singing—an excuse pure and simple. But Sir William, now half-hearted in his refusal, accepted it.

Emma by this time had an ally in the Duchess of Argyll, once one of the beautiful Miss Gunnings, who had come to Naples, to die as it proved, and who used her last few months in supporting Emma's efforts at rehabilitating herself. The countenance of the Duchess, coming on top of Emma's own exemplary conduct, had a tremendous effect. By September 1790 Sir William was able to tell Greville not only that he hoped to visit England in the spring of 1791, but also that Emma "realy deserves everything, and has gained the love of everybody, and wou'd you think it, is preached up by the Queen and nobility as a rare example of virtue. By Aprile's lessons she begins to sing in a capital stile, and has talents for both bravoura,

pathetic and buffo; but, as her voice and expression is so perfect, the pathetic is what I cultivate most, and I am sure in that she will excell any dilettante in England." Emma, as those last words show, had won permission to return with him.

To Mary Hamilton Sir William wrote more plainly. "I do assure you that her goodness of heart is such, and her conduct has been such for four years she has resided with me, that I shou'd not hesitate, was I in a private character, to put the law on the side of our connection. But as I have experienced that of all women in the world, the English are the most difficult to deal with abroad, I fear eternal tracasseries, was she to be placed above them here, and which must be the case, as a Minister's wife, in every country, takes place of every rank of nobility."

When the only bar that prevents a man from marrying is the possible jealousies of other women, it needs very little insight to guess that the marriage is imminent. Greville had sufficient acumen to realise that, and wrote in protest. But his letter came too late. Emma answered him with a touch of ironical amusement that must have rankled in his soul. Most galling of all must have been her closing words, "I shall allways esteem you for your relationship to Sir William & haveing been the means of me knowing him."

Emma to Greville.

"Naples.

"*Jany.* 1791.

"I received your oblidging letter on Thursday & am sensible of the part you take in my happiness & wellfare. I have not time today to answer to all the points in your letter, but will the next post. You may think of my aflictions when I heard of the Duchess of Argylles death, I never had such a freind as her & that you will know when I see you & recount to you all the acts of kindness she shewd

to me, for they where two good & numerous to describe in a letter : think then to a heart of sinsibility & grattitude what it must suffer, *ma passiensa io ho molto*. You need not be affraid for me in England ; we come for a short time & that time must be occupied in buisiness & to take our last leave. I dont wish to atract notice, I wish to be an example of good conduct & to shew the world that a pretty woman is not allways a *fool*, all my ambition is to make Sir Wm. happy & you will see he is so. As to our seperating houses, we cant do it or why should we, you cant think 2 people that as lived five years with all the domestic happiness thats possible, can seperate, & those 2 persons that knows no other comfort but in one anothers comppany, which is the case I assure you with ous, tho you Bachelers dont understand it, but you cant imagjine, 2 houses must seperate ous, no, it cant be, that you will be a judge of when you see us. We will lett you in to our plans & secretts, Sir William will lett you know on what a footing we are here. On Monday last we give a concert & Ball at our hous. I had near four hundred persons, all the foreign ministers & their wives, all the first ladies of fasshion, foreynors & neapolitans, our house was full in every room. I had the Banti, the tenor Casacelli and 2 others to sing. Sir Wm. dressed me in wite sattin, no coller abbout me but my hair & cheeks. I was without powder as it was the first great assembly we had given publickly. All the ladies strove to out do one another in dress and jewels, but Sir William said I was the finest jewel amongst them. Every night our house is open to small partys of fifty or sixty men & women. We have musick, tea. &c. &c., & we have a great adition lately to our party, we have a new Spanish ambassader & his wife & we as made a great frendship & we are allways together. She is charming. Think then after what Sir Wm. as done for me if I should not be the horrids wreth in the world not to be exemplary towards him. Endead I will do all I can to

render him happy. We shall be with you in the Spring & return heer in Novr. & the next year you may pay ous a visit, we shall be glad to see you. I shall allways esteem you for your relationship to Sir William & haveing been the means of me knowing him. As to Sir W. I confess to you I doat on him nor I never can have any other person but him. This confession will please you I know. I will write more next post.

"EMMA."

CHAPTER X

LADY HAMILTON

Although Emma felt secure, her marriage was by no means a certainty; she was counting far too much on the victories she had won at Naples. England was quite another matter. Instead of the Duchess of Argyll and the Italian countesses, she had to bear the scrutiny of all Sir William's high-born relatives, who would look her up and down as only high-born relatives can. There was only one, so far as she knew, in the least sympathetic. Then there was the question of the King's attitude, and George III. was a very different man from Ferdinand of the two Sicilies. For all his fondness, Sir William was not likely to deem his ambassadorship well lost for the pleasure of giving Emma a legal status, and a royal frown might blast her hopes. Indeed there were difficulties enough, and Emma's exultation arose partly from ignorance, and partly from a firm reliance on her own fascinations. She had told Greville that she did not wish to attract notice in England; but unless she was thinking of unfavourable notice, she was certainly lying.

The couple arrived in London about the middle of May 1791, to find the whole family in a frenzy of conjecture as to whether or not they were already married. With a sigh of relief, they wrote round that "his *lady* is *not* his *wife*."

Meanwhile his sister-in-law, with the female daring which every man of them but Sir William must have admired, took him in hand. "Are you going to marry her?" she asked, long before the unfortunate knight had been able to gauge public opinion.

He temporised. "As a public character at Naples," he answered, "I do not think it right to marry Mrs Hart—from respect to my King."

"Very proper," commented his sister-in-law; and then developing her attack, "but I hope you think there is something owing to *yourself*."

"Oh, as to that," retorted Sir William, deciding to make a plunge, "the first object is to be happy," and before his sister-in-law could recover he burst into raptures over Emma's charms, talents and accomplishments.

The good lady was silenced and her rout was completed by her own daughter, Mary Hamilton, now Mrs Dickenson. She was Emma's one ally, and had frequently corresponded with her uncle on the subject of the fascinating Emma. Sir William's decision had no doubt been hastened by Mary's arguments, and he wrote to her gratefully, "I have always liked what you have written on a certain delicate subject, and you and I think very much alike." He had shown her letters to Emma, who cried over them, and when shortly after she received an invitation to visit the Dickensons in Derbyshire replied hopefully and humbly, "I hope to shew you that you have not pleaded in a wrong cause."

Mary's husband followed his wife's lead. He was not very intimately concerned, and what he saw of Emma pleased him, though it could not quite overcome a certain inborn pomposity. "I went to Emma," he told his wife, "and staid an hour with her and her mother . . . I told her that the eyes of many people were upon her, that I rejoiced to hear of these determinations as I ardently wished that she and Sir William should be perfectly happy; that I could see it would be very easy for her to keep up in him that warmth of attachment which he entertained for her, and that I hoped that he would find Emma and Lady H. *the same*."

Poor Emma! However, support, even if magisterial, must have comforted her—and she was to have further

comfort in the attitude of the King. George III. was not supremely happy but he contented himself with rallying Sir William, and hinting that he was not quite so religious as when he made his first marriage. Nothing very dreadful, and Sir William must have made his bow with a sigh of relief.

The rest of the family were coldly disapproving and hoped for the best—all, that is to say, except the men, who secretly thought Sir William uncommonly lucky. The ladies' general attitude of sniffishness is summed up in a letter from Lady Frances Harper to her cousin. "I am very glad you have seen Sr. W. Hamilton comfortably and had time for conversation, tho' probably the *Lady* was in the way. I believe it likely she may be our aunt. My mother in her last seemed to fear it; do you think it likely; *I own I think not*; for making a *shew* of her *Graces and Person to all his acquaintance in Town*, does not appear a *preliminary for marriage*."

So they relieved their feelings with capitals and italics, while outside the family enthusiasm ran high. Emma had very early renewed her visits to Romney, and stirred the flickering embers of his sanity to fresh life and genius. He began a series of pictures for which she sat with her old enthusiasm and more than her old talent. Other artists were seeking high and low for an introduction. "A particular friend of mine," wrote Sir Thomas Lawrence, "promised to get me introduced at Sir W. H.'s to see this wonderful woman you have doubtless heard of—Mrs Hart." And the Prince of Wales, as a connoisseur of both art and womankind, went from studio to studio ordering portraits of her.

So with the rest of the fashionable world; they were tumbling over each other to see "this wonderful woman," and her no less wonderful Attitudes. The "shew of her Graces and Person" was the talk of the town. Romney's transports are well known; "She performed both in the

serious and comic to admiration; but her 'Nina' surpasses everything I ever saw, and I believe, as a piece of acting, nothing ever surpassed it. The whole company were in an agony of sorrow. Her acting is simple, grand, terrible, and pathetic."

In the provinces it was the same. Emma and Sir William visited the freakish Beckford at Fonthill, near Bath. The following extract records the effect she produced: "Sir William was here for some days, and I put myself as much as possible in the way to see Mrs Hart, but always fail'd. Mr Preston saw her and was much struck with her figure and beauty, and Lord Charlemont and another friend of mine who were so fortunate as to hear her softly sing, and see her sweetly smile and exhibit a variety of attitudes and passions, described her very accurately to me. I had first heard of her talents by a letter from Mr William Locke, who said that all the statues and pictures he had seen were in grace so inferior to her, as scarce to deserve a look."

Emma, in fact, became a nine days' wonder; there was no doubting the sensation she had made, or that the sensation was favourable. This was enough for Sir William. They were married on the 6th of September 1791 at Marylebone Church.

When the marriage was a fact, the relations shrugged their shoulders over poor William's folly, and proceeded to make the best of a bad job. The men were now justified in saying the pretty things they genuinely felt, and the women managed to secure an added glow of virtue. "God forbid," as a friend wrote to Mary Dickenson, "I should think a false step irretrievable, or that one vice shuts out every virtue; but Sir William Hamilton's age, family and character, make one sorry he should have been so fascinated, and the example is a bad one. He, however, may be happy, and she good and grateful, and I hope they will be so." It was a nice, comforting thought which

SIR WILLIAM HAMILTON

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elevated the thinkers without doing them any harm ; for, after all, the couple would soon be safely at Naples where Emma's mistakes would hardly matter. That was the general feeling entertained by the family, all, that is to say, except Greville.

So amid congratulations and good wishes the couple set out for Naples, both of them quite absurdly in the seventh heaven of delight. While she was still *en route* Emma poured out her heart to her new-found friend, Mary Dickenson : " I am so happy and feel so content, that I shall have a pleasure in writing to you, and believe me before the 6th of September I was always unhappy and discontented with myself ; Ah, madam, how much do I owe to your dear uncle. I feel every moment my obligations to him and am always afraid I can never do enough for him since that moment. I say to myself, Am I his wife, and can I never separate more. Am I Emma Hamilton ? It seems impossible I can be so happy. Surely no person was ever so happy as I am." It was in something of the same spirit that she wrote to Romney shortly after she reached Naples : " How gratefull then do I feel to my dear, dear husband that has restored peace to my mind, that has given me honors, rank, and what is more, innocence and happiness."

Both letters are singularly honest and singularly devoid of love. Gratitude, yes, in abundance, but love, no. Emma's real object in marriage was perhaps partly the added sense of security, but mainly a yearning to recover what she called her innocence.

On their way through Paris, the couple were received by the luckless Louis XVI. and his Queen, Marie Antoinette. They were present at the Assembly where the King accepted the constitution forced upon him, and before they left, Marie Antoinette entrusted Emma with a letter to her sister, the Queen of Naples. Emma tried in later years to magnify this into a signal service. Marie Antoinette

may have found it difficult to secure faithful messengers, and to that extent it was a service, but the fact remains that in those days of uncertain and irregular posts it was the commonest of courtesies for travellers to carry letters, and Emma was more than repaid by the Queen, who in thus recognising and using her as a messenger, made her reception at the Court of Naples certain. Hitherto, for all her marriage, her position had not been assured; the English Court had refused admission to Sir William's wife as much as to his mistress, and Emma still knew royalty only from a distance. It might have been better for her had she never known them nearer.

So Emma returned to Naples, a married woman and bearing a letter from one queen to another. Can it be wondered at if this girl of twenty-six, still in the hey-day of her beauty, felt happy in the hope that she had regained her character before it was too late, and that the years of struggling against the thoughtless slips of youth were over and done?

Yet the very moment of triumph was marred. Hitherto the world had consisted for Emma of those who admired and those who ignored her. Now she was to realise that success breeds enemies, and that she and her husband could be attacked through each other. The couple had scarcely returned to Naples before ugly rumours followed them from England, mingling with the letters of congratulation. "I find," Sir William wrote, "in England some that are hungry after my place had trumped up a story that I had imposed on the Court of Naples by presenting Ly. H., and that the King of England was very angry and meant to turn me out. After 27 years' service and spending all the King's money and all my own, it wou'd be rather hard as I have not been any ways guilty and my marriage is my own private business." It was a quaint plea for favour—spending all the King's money and all his own—but it was never put to the test. The trouble blew over and Lord

Abercorn was able to assure him: "As to any foolish reports in our newspapers, you need not cast a thought upon them."

Another enemy, and the more dangerous because he feigned friendship, was Greville, whose waning affection was definitely antagonised by this marriage which upset all his scheming and made his hopes uncertain. There were two possibilities to curdle whatever milk of love remained—the possibility that Emma might persuade Sir William to leave her his Welsh estate, and the possibility that there might be a child, who would inevitably inherit it.

Greville was frightened for himself, and in any case could not forgive. His first thought was petty revenge. Hitherto he had paid for the upkeep of Emma's child, the baby of Parkgate. This child had been farmed out with a Mrs Blackburn at Manchester, and apparently had never been seen by Emma since 1784. The charge was £65 a year, and when the half-yearly account came in at the end of 1791, Greville quietly gave Mrs Blackburn an order on Sir William's agents. Then he wrote to Sir William: "I have taken a liberty with you, and I communicate it to you instead of Ly. H., because I know it would give her some embarassment, and she might imagine it unkind in me so soon to trouble you about her protégé. . . . I do not mean this necessary step to be concealed from Ly. H. . . . The natural attachment to a deserted orphan may be supposed to increase from the length of time she has been protected. I have avoided any such sentiment. . . . I enclose the account that you may see the particulars of what I have allowed her, which you will continue till her plans are decided on. I cannot have an opinion what the plan should be, but that which is most agreable to Ly. H. will be best; and I know that she will consider your attention on this subject as additional proof of your kindness." So he washed his hands of the child, and Sir William took over the charge without demur.

Having vented his spleen Greville turned to more serious affairs—the Welsh estate. Hitherto he had paid some attention to Sir William's wish that he should put himself in Sir William's shoes. Henceforward he determined to push ahead regardless of his uncle's interests. So far as revenge was his motive, his scheme proved more successful than he could have hoped. But of that hereafter.

CHAPTER XI

ROYALTY AND REVOLUTION

(1)

Emma returned to Naples with a ready-made plan of conduct. It succeeded admirably for a time, and might have lasted for ever but for the one drawback of all preconceived ideas—their liability to be upset by a change of events. Emma could not be expected to guess what no one else realised—the approach of the French Revolution.

At first all went like clockwork. Emma did not dream of pushing herself forward or acting presumptuously; she mingled a shrewd common sense with a very becoming modesty, and found to her delight that the whole community of Naples, English and Neapolitan alike, were ready to meet her half-way. Her prudence during the five years of probation was bearing fruit. How favourable was the atmosphere can be gathered from many sources. Lady Malmesbury, who was at Naples on Emma's return, wrote that "she really behaved as well as possible, and quite wonderfully, considering her origin and education." Other favourable reports were broadcast, and within a few months Lady Herries in England was able to say, "I hear often of Sir William and Lady Hamilton; Lady Hamilton is admired and loved by everybody."

The Queen herself was completely won over by Emma's simplicity. Hamilton was on intimate terms with the royal family, and the Queen was able to explain her views without hurting his feelings. As the English Court had refused to countenance Emma, the Queen could not receive her as the Ambassador's wife, but she was ready

and willing to receive her as the wife of Sir William Hamilton. This was all that either Emma or her husband asked.

The Queen, said Sir William, " received her most kindly. Emma very naturally told her whole story and that all her desire was by her future conduct to shew her gratitude to me, and to prove to the world that a young, beautiful woman, tho' of obscure birth, cou'd have noble sentiments and act properly in the great world." This very modest bearing, coming on top of the nervous apprehensions which everyone had felt, proved irresistible. " In short," Sir William summed up, " the Queen of Naples is quite fond of her and has taken her under her protection. All the Neapolitan nobility have been to see her and shew her every attention, and the English ladies who are numerous here this year, are quite fond of her."

Emma was not merely posing. She was genuinely grateful to her husband, and genuinely humble in the new circle she had entered. She did not for one moment relax her efforts at self-improvement ; the wife was as constant and regular as the mistress in training her voice and learning her languages. All she did was to take on the fresh task of learning how to behave in her new situation. But it was part and parcel of Emma's fate that her most legitimate efforts should lead to her own undoing. The early days of her married life were no exception. Normally she would have been wrapped up in her husband, but this could not be expected in what was, after all, the sixth year of their connection. Normally, her efforts to stand well with the Court and Society would have been undertaken to forward her husband's work on a basis of love, or at least mutual interest. Actually her efforts were concentrated on herself, and, instead of helping her husband, distracted his attention.

Within a few weeks of their return to Naples the King took Sir William on a shooting expedition. Sir William's

letters, though natural enough, make strange reading for a husband so soon parted from a newly wedded wife. Throughout the whole of them run advice and comment. "You are wise enough to see the line it is proper for you to take; and have hitherto followed it most rigorously; and I can assure you that I have not the least doubt of your continuing in it." "You neglect [your handwriting] rather too much, but as what you write is good sense, everybody will forgive the scrawl." "You are certainly the most domestic young woman I know, but you are young and most beautiful, and it would not be natural if you did not like to shew yourself a little in public." "I approve of all you do in my absence; but it would be nonsense, and appear affected, to carry your scruples too far. Divert yourself reasonably." "Consult your own good sense, and do not be in a hurry; and I am sure you will always act right." "Take my word that for some years to come the more simply you dress, the more conspicuous will be your beauty."

In short, Sir William regarded her more as a protégé than as a wife, and took a sort of detached delight in her progress. Instead of resenting slights, he was proud if she got successfully through the daily round; instead of expecting the fruits of love, he accepted the tribute of gratitude. Has any other man in the seventh month of what was, or should have been, essentially a love match, written of his wife, "She goes on improving daily, particularly in musick and in the French and Italian languages. She is really an extraordinary being, and most gratefull to me for having saved her from the precipice into which she had good sense enough to see she must without me have inevitably fallen, and she sees that nothing but a constant good conduct can maintain the respect that is now shown her by everybody. It has often been remarked that a reformed rake makes a good husband. Why not vice versa?"

Thus her relations with her husband were fixed on the basis of gratitude from herself and condescension from him. It was a dangerous basis when the man was an elderly dilettante and the woman an unusual beauty endowed with more than ordinary vigour and talents. It paved the way for complications, as soon as the novelty of recognition had worn off and Emma had realised that she could stand on her own feet.

(2)

There were two further elements in the prologue to Emma's undoing: the character of the Neapolitan Court, and the course of history.

It was at the Court of Naples that Emma first met royalty face to face. Royalty in the eighteenth century included two distinct schools, the vigorous and the vicious, and tended to extremes in both aspects. Ferdinand, as a Bourbon and the son of the King of Spain, belonged to the vicious school, and, all things considered, was an extraordinarily favourable specimen. His Queen, Maria Carolina, as the daughter of Maria Theresa, belonged to the vigorous class. Ferdinand's father had renounced the throne of Naples on succeeding to the Spanish crown in 1759, when Ferdinand was a child of eight. His education was entirely neglected, with his father's approval, either, as some hold, in order that his father might still be able to control the politics of Naples, or, as others say, out of fear that he might follow his eldest brother's example and become an imbecile. Whatever the reason, he grew up with a wholesome horror of books and an inordinate delight in slaughtering animals; he would hunt anything living from birds to boars, and, when the opportunity offered, men and women as well. The more stupendous the bag the better.

For reasons of policy it was decided that he should marry

an Austrian archduchess, and he did in despite of fate. Two wretched archduchesses were marked down for the sacrifice, and both died—of smallpox—the second while actually preparing for the journey to Naples. Ferdinand, not quite seventeen, had never seen his future bride, and bore the news of her decease with stoic indifference until it was broken to him that decency required the postponement of his hunting for at least one day. He submitted reluctantly, and proceeded to kill time first by billiards and then by leap-frog. When these diversions palled, the gloom of sheer boredom was dispelled by the bright suggestion of a Lord-in-Waiting that they should celebrate the funeral of the bride-elect. The idea was hailed with joy; a youthful chamberlain of effeminate appearance was selected to represent the lady, and after being laid in a coffin was dabbed over the face and hands with chocolate to represent the pustules of smallpox, and in this realistic manner was borne in procession through the Palace, with Ferdinand following as chief mourner. So the day of enforced seclusion drew to an end, and so Maria Carolina was substituted for her very much mourned and buried sister. They were married in May 1768, when Ferdinand was seventeen, and his wife not quite sixteen.

This royal *mariage de convenance* made very little difference to the King, except that in due course it provided him with a ready-made ruler of his kingdom and innumerable children. For himself, he continued his amours with ladies of his own selection and his more vigorous sports and pastimes. Violent exercise amused him and coarse practical jokes absorbed whatever brains he had. Among his various accomplishments was a habit of picking up the dirtier Neapolitan loungers, flinging them into the sea and rescuing them if they were unable to swim. Another favourite amusement was to take the fish he had caught to market, where he sold them by auction, haggling, bargaining and indulging in obscene repartee with the fishwives

and porters; the proceeds of these auctions were generally flung among the crowd.

Affairs of state bothered him not at all. Usually he ignored them, but when the whim seized him he would dispense royal bounty or rough justice in cottage or field, wherever he happened to be. As a statesman he was, of course, impossible, but he enjoyed a very large share of popularity with the *lazzaroni*—the lowest class of loungers and labourers in Naples, who lived for the day and found work unprofitable and unnecessary in their luxuriant and fertile clime.

Such, roughly, was the King: a coarse, stupid, good-humoured squire, with streaks of savagery and plenty of vice.

His Queen was made in a different mould. Like most royalty of the time, she was not above indulging her passions, and Emma's favourable reception was no doubt in part due to the fact that neither the King nor the Queen, nor for that matter the rest of the nobility, were in a position to throw stones.

But leaving aside her frailty, Maria Carolina had been brought up in the Court of a great Empress, and by birth and education had inherited something of Maria Theresa's highbrow liberalism, without, unfortunately, the Empress's moderation and statesmanship. The effects of her liberalism were far-reaching and utterly unforeseen by herself. One of the terms of her marriage settlement was that on giving birth to a son, she should be admitted to the Council. This stipulation fitted in with her character, but was of course inserted for other reasons; the future development of a girl of fifteen cannot be accurately forecast. The fact is that Naples had long been a bone of contention between the Austrian Hapsburgs and the Spanish Bourbons, being one phase of the broader rivalry which united Austria and England against Spain and France. Latterly, however, events on the Continent—notably the rise of Germany

under Frederick the Great—had driven Austria rather unwillingly to drop the English friendship and make overtures to France. This *rapprochement* was never very warm, but it involved a series of inter-marriages which landed the unfortunate Marie Antoinette on the throne of France and Maria Carolina on the throne of Naples. Both of them were intended to keep their husbands—the one disreputable and the other weak—in the background, and lead the country of their adoption in the paths of Austrian diplomacy. Both of them made a mess of politics in their own individual way, and both paid the penalty. One hardly knows whether the French Queen or her Neapolitan sister suffered most, but at least Marie Antoinette died nobly, and her vagaries were forgotten and forgiven in the bestial violence of her persecutors. Maria Carolina had the disadvantage of outliving the storm and sinking into spiteful and impotent ragings against common sense and her best friends.

She was an excitable woman, given to tears and hysterics, but, as royalty went in those days, she meant well, and was cast by fortune for a rôle she was quite unqualified to fill.

(3)

Maria Carolina gave birth to a son in 1777, and from that moment not only demanded a seat at the Council but took a leading part in affairs. She delighted the Neapolitan highbrows and puzzled the rest of the population by plunging into a system of reform. All the intelligentsia —that very dangerous hotbed of theory—were summoned to her side, and instigated into writing treatises on every conceivable subject, while the Queen hastened to put their ideas into execution. The Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, like every other semi-feudal state, had its privileged classes. Without exception she trod on their toes, and as might be expected in the case of a young and masterful woman

who was also a queen, had not the least conception that anyone was disgruntled, although the nobility, the clergy and the professional classes were all alienated. She would have found it still more incredible that the common herd were merely bored with educational schemes for which they were not ripe, and disgusted with methods of self-help for which they had no ambition. In a word her liberalism was misplaced, and like most benefits thrust into unwilling hands annoyed the recipient in proportion as it increased the self-esteem of the donor. By 1792 when Emma was first presented, the Queen was as cordially disliked as the King was popular. Meanwhile her attitude towards her unfortunate subjects was taking on a very different complexion, for reasons that must be explained at greater length.

For practical purposes the French Revolution may be dated from 1789, the year in which the harassed Louis convoked the States-General and the Bastille was stormed. Thereafter events moved with ever-increasing speed to their culmination in Napoleon. But to the outside world the troubles in France seemed to be merely local, and remained of minor interest certainly till the midsummer of 1791. But in 1791 the tiresome French business insisted on obtruding itself. Louis XVI., growing weary of his want of success, tried to escape out of the kingdom. He was caught at Varennes and led back to Paris, where in September he was forced to accept the new constitution laid before him by the Assembly. Emma and her husband had witnessed the capitulation.

It was the spectacle of a king being ignominiously held on his throne that first roused any live interest in the neighbouring monarchies. Their sense of the fitting was outraged, and they paused for a moment in their own more weighty concern of dismembering Poland to meet at Pillnitz, and squash the outbreak with a Declaration. The only result of this pompous nothing was to enflame the war-

like feelings of the French Assembly. In March 1792 Louis XVI. had to accept a ministry bent on war. In April war was actually declared against Bohemia and Hungary, and a month later against Sardinia. Thus began the great series of wars which were to last, on and off, for the next twenty-three years.

The warlike fever grew in France throughout the year, and in August when the royal family had been lodged in the Temple, it began to take an uglier form. The slogan became "peace to peoples; war to governments." Louis XVI. was executed in January 1793 and Marie Antoinette at the end of the year.

The effect of these various movements upon Naples can be briefly summarised. As a very second rate power, the kingdom naturally tended towards dependence on one of the greater monarchies. In any crisis Ferdinand would have turned naturally to Spain and the Queen to Austria. While there was no crisis, and the Queen was paramount, Naples drifted steadily in the direction of Austria. It mattered very little to the King so long as no cloud interrupted the routine of his hunting, and still less so long as Austrian policy continued to maintain the Bourbon alliance. England was wholly out of the picture, except to the extent that the ambassador was incomparably the most amusing member of the court circle. Apart from any other reason, England under the mismanagement of George III. was apparently negligible. The only other connection with England was Sir John Acton, an Anglo-French adventurer, who had become first an admiral of the Neapolitan fleet, then Minister both of Marine and War, and lastly Prime Minister.

The Queen's attitude towards England was influenced by two factors, first a revolt in Belgium, which once more threw England and Austria together, and secondly by the fact that British sea power was slowly reviving. Naples was almost more vulnerable by sea than by land, and

certainly was more easily to be succoured by sea. There was therefore a growing tendency for Naples to ally herself with England, if and when the necessity arose. By the time of Emma's marriage the necessity was rapidly approaching. It was precisely at that moment that the French Revolution began to be important. Within a few months it became serious, and within a year terrifying. The Queen had every reason to react towards it. She had seized power deliberately, and for many years been sole ruler of Naples; so long as rule meant nothing more than the exercise of despotic power, she enjoyed it; but the responsibility became too great when rule meant the possibility of facing revolt at home and war abroad. The Queen was very sharp-sighted up to a point; she knew perfectly well that the French Revolution was largely the outcome of "philosophic" doctrines; she also knew that her reforms had rested on the same basis. Discontent at Naples was growing too obvious to be ignored, and she jumped to the conclusion that Naples was going the way of France. It was doing nothing of the sort; the discontent was confined to the nobles and professional classes; it had not touched the people as a whole. But being alarmed and also weak, the Queen took the inevitable step; she became suspicious and tyrannical, and searched round eagerly for allies. Austria she could depend on, but that only covered the land. At sea, she had the navy which was her own creation, but very justly doubting its sufficiency, she looked towards England. It was natural in the circumstances that she should tend to make a confidante of Emma, partly to please Sir William, and partly because in trouble a woman turns towards her own sex. The Queen was prepared to meet Emma more than half-way.

Everything in fact conspired to bring Emma into importance before she was ready. Instead of natural growth, she was forced in the hot-house of the French Revolution. Had she married Sir William on her first arrival at Naples,

she would have had plenty of time to settle down, and the French Revolution would have found her more experienced and less likely to have her head turned. As it was, she was raised at one step from a mere instrument of pleasure into the confidante of an increasingly hysterical Queen. The wonder is, not that she came to think more highly of herself than she should, but that she retained so long the becoming humility of her first days.

(4)

Emma was destined to become more and more involved in State affairs. Her knowledge was never profound and her interest was always limited. Perhaps it was for this reason that she did not so much enter politics as suddenly find herself caught up in the wheel, and on the whole she awoke to the fact with more dismay than pleasure. A bird's-eye view of the next few years will show how much was fortune's doing, how little hers.

In the early days Emma and the Queen were at cross purposes. The Queen's attitude and motives have been explained. Emma, on the other hand, not having the least idea of political life or world-wide movements, was holding herself back and cautiously feeling her way. During the whole of 1792 the Queen was constantly inviting her to Court and showing her marked attention, and yet, as Emma afterwards stated, it was not until the beginning of 1793 that the two became really intimate. The first mention of politics in her letters appears in June 1793, when she tells Greville that "for political reasons we have lived eight months in Caserta," explaining in the same letter that "the reason why we stay now here is I have promised the Queen to remain as long as she does." Politics, in fact, are merely royal wishes. Her own time and thoughts were concentrated on entertaining and society; "I have no pretensions; nor do I abuse of Her Majesty's

goodness." Even at the end of 1793 her knowledge of politics was purely superficial. Although Sir William was ill and the times critical, she neither attempted to help him, nor imagined that she could. By December 1794 her attitude had changed considerably. She was now in constant attendance at Court, and violent against the French. Finally, in April 1795 we find her taking an active though reluctant part. "Send me some news," she wrote to Greville, once more in office, "political and private, for against my will *owing to my situation here* I am got into politicks and I wish to have news for our dear much loved Queen."

In spite of every opportunity, Emma never regarded herself as in any sense interested in politics for three whole years. She accepted the Queen's friendship with gratitude as a proof merely of condescension and goodness.

This brief survey throws light on Emma's character. She has often been represented as an ambitious adventuress, and sometimes as a stateswoman of uncommon abilities. Both conceptions are entirely false. No ambitious woman could have failed to find that she was being welcomed with open arms; no adventuress takes several years to force an open door. As for the myth of stateswoman, Emma had no bent for politics, no wish to enter the mysterious portals, no knowledge of how to act when within. All she could hope to give was such scrappy news as Greville might dole out in his letters; all her views of European movements were borrowed from Sir William or the Queen. Neither now nor later did she give the least hint of statesmanship; she never rose beyond the rôle of partisan, retailing the opinions of others.

CHAPTER XII

ENTER NELSON

(1)

To return to the actual course of events, the early months of 1792 saw the introduction of Emma to the Court, and almost at the same time the beginning of the European wars. The Queen was busy cultivating Emma, and Emma was quite blind to the fact. The next ray of light comes with two letters of December 1792. One, written to Mrs Burt, an old family friend, deals almost entirely with the grandmother at Hawarden. Among the finest traits of Emma's character was her unswerving devotion to her poor relations. However high she rose, she never forgot or disowned the members of her family, not even the wasters and scoundrels. There was only one exception, and that partial; she never admitted her relationship to the poor little Emma of Parkgate. From a distance she watched over the child's growth and provided for her future, but the girl finally disappears with a last sad appeal to her mother for recognition. Emma never gave it; her mother-love never recovered from the blow Greville administered. But where her own shame was not involved, Emma was fearlessly loyal and, as the following letter shows, generous.

Emma to Mrs Burt.

"CASERTA,

"*December 26th*, 1792.

"I receved your very kind letter this morning, and am surprised to hear my poor dear grandmother can be in want, as I left her thirty pound when I left England,

besides tea, sugar and several things, and it is now five weeks since I wrote to a friend of ours, and endead a relation of my husband's, to send twenty pounds more, so that my Grandmother must have had it on cristmas day, you may be sure I shou'd never neglect that dear tender parent, who I have the greatest obligations to, and she must have been cheated or she never cou'd be in want; but you did very right, my dearest friend, to send her the four guines, which I will send you with enterest and a thousand thanks. . . . I only wait for an answer from our friend with the account of my grandmother's having receved her twenty pounds, and I will then send you an order on him for your money, and I send a piece of silk to make you a gown. . . . I am the happiest woman in the world; my husband is the best and most tender of husbands, and treats me and my mother with such goodness and tenderness; endeed I love him dearly. If I cou'd have my dear grandmother with me how happy I shou'd be; but God's will be done, she shall never want, and if she shou'd wish for anything over above what I have sent, let her have it, and I will repay you with enterest and thanks. You see, my dear Mrs Burt, in a year and 2 months she will have had fifty pounds, theirfore I have nothing to lay to my charge. I write to Mrs Thomas who lives on the spot and who I hope will see she is kindly used. I enclose this in a friend's letter to save you the postage, which is very dear. I will write to you as soon as we have receved the answer that the twenty pounds are receved, and I will then say more about Mr Connor. . . . Miss Dodsworth—Mrs Greffor now—is brought to bed, and the King was Godfather and made her a present of a gold watch set in pearls, twelve sylver candlesticks, and sylver tea board and sylver coffey pot, suger basen, etc. etc. She is a very good wife, and Mr Greffor is a good man and the King is very fond of him. . . . I am now at Caserta; we have a good many English with us, the Duchess of Ancaster, Lord and Lady

Cholmondly, Lady Plymouth, Lady Webster, Lady Forbes, etc. etc., they all dined with me yesterday. . . ."

This letter displays Emma's fundamental nature. The second displays how the stress of events moulded her character. Towards the end of the year Sir William fell suddenly and seriously ill. The effect on Emma was electrical; it awoke her to a realisation of her position, and she told Greville in grim earnest, "I now know myself again & I shall not easily fall into the same error again."

It recalls her light-hearted remark to Sir William that she had got her wisdom teeth, only it has a more determined tang. Then she had discarded love; now she had taken on the task of self-preservation. She knew that Greville was Sir William's heir, and accepted the fact; it was not as yet part of her plan to oust her former lover. But that merely made her own fortune more precarious. What would she have done if Sir William had really died? The extent of her fears is reflected in her exaggeration: according to her letter she was eight days without undressing, eating or sleeping. From the moment of Sir William's recovery she set herself more strenuously than ever to make good her standing at the Court, so that she might hope for some provision if the worst should happen.

What was uppermost in her mind came first; then she turned to her grandmother's affairs, and in the last half of the letter asked Greville to send her £20 in Emma's name. As this part is largely repetition of the letter to Mrs Burt, it is omitted.

Emma to Greville.

"Caserta,
"*Dec. 4th.* 1792.

"Dear Sir,

"I have the pleasure to inform you that Sir William is out of danger & very well considering the illness he as had to battle with. He as been 15 days in bed with a billious fever & I have been almost as ill as him with

anxiety, aprehension, & fatige, the last, endeed, the least of what I have felt & I am now doubly repaid by the dayly progress he makes for the better. Luckily we are at Caserta were his convalescence will have fair play & I am in hopes he will be better than ever he was in his life, for his disorder as been long gathering & was a liver complaint. I need not say to you my dear Mr Greville what I have suffered, endeed I was almost distracted, from such extreme happiness at once to such misery, that I felt, your good heart may imagine. I was eight days without undressing, eating or sleeping. I have great obligations to the English ladies & Neapolitans, altho we are 16 miles from Naples, Lady Plymouth, Lady Dunmore, Lady Webster & several others sent twice a day & offered to come & stay with me, & the King & Queen sent constantly, morning & evening, the most flattering messages, but all was nothing to me—what cou'd console me for the loss of such a husband, friend & protecter, for surely no happiness is like ours. We live but for one another, but I was to happy, I had imagined I was never more to be unhappy, all is right, I now know myself again & I shall not easily fall in to the same error again, for every moment I feel what I felt when I thought I was loseing him for ever. Pray excuse me, but you who love Sir William may figure to your self my situation at that moment. . . .

" Emma Hamilton.

" Sir W. as wrote you a few lines."

(2)

Emma could not have chosen a more opportune moment for resolving to make good her standing at Court. At the end of 1792 an acute French observer said that war with England was inevitable " in order to get rid of 300,000 armed brigands who ought not to be allowed to re-enter France." On February 1st, 1793, war was declared.

Maria Carolina was delighted. The French had already occupied Savoy and Nice, and the southern nations—Spain, Sardinia and Naples—were menaced by the French fleet at Toulon. Besides, Naples had already felt the power of France. In the previous year Maria Carolina had refused to receive Mackau, the accredited representative of the Republic, and had invited the powers of Italy to join in a confederacy. A French fleet under La Touche appeared off Naples to demand not merely reparation, but a promise of neutrality; and the Queen, powerless for all her new navy, had to give in. More than that; the presence of the hostile fleet encouraged the Jacobin coteries in Naples itself to an open display of their leanings. In actual fact these coteries were of minor importance, but the Queen was now far too much alarmed to take a just view of the position. Thinking Naples on the verge of revolution, she redoubled her efforts to suppress the first sparks. The number of spies and informers was increased; arrests took place by night, and persons simply disappeared. A reign of terror set in, and the Queen was the most terrified of the lot. Beset on all sides with fears, she was only too glad to hear that England had entered the lists. She hastened to ask for protection, and on the 20th of July 1793 entered into a secret treaty with Great Britain.

England entered the war reluctantly and fully expecting a speedy conclusion. She was merely an accessory in a great coalition, which was advancing on France from all sides, and her main sphere of action was the sea. Accordingly a British fleet entered the Mediterranean under the command of Lord Hood, with the object of blockading Toulon. Among the ships was the *Agamemnon*, of sixty-four guns, under Captain Horatio Nelson, whose life for the last few years had been full of disappointments. Soon after his marriage in 1787 he returned to England, where he remained without employment till January 1793. Though he returned with a reputation which gave promise

of future brilliance, he found himself out of favour with both the Admiralty and the Court. In part his misfortunes may have been due to the West Indian peculators whose frauds he had exposed, but the main cause of his trouble was his indiscreet attachment to the Duke of Clarence, himself out of favour, and the touch of something like bravado with which he flaunted his partisanship. He was loyal and rash in his friendships long before he met Emma. During these five years Nelson was living quietly at home with his wife. He was newly married, and if there was one time more than another when he might have been expected to welcome leisure, it should have been in the early years of wedded bliss. Yet he found no joy in it. As Captain Mahan says, "The only deduction of real interest from his letters at this time is the absolute failure of his home life and affections to content his aspirations,—the emptiness both of mind and heart, which caused his passionate eagerness for external employment to fill the void." But this passionate eagerness never led him to find interest in anything outside his chosen profession. Nelson was singularly one-sided; if he could not be sailing the seas, there was nothing for him to do but collect birds' eggs and dig in the garden. In January 1793 the cloud passed as suddenly as it had gathered; at the end of the month he was appointed to the *Agamemnon*, and by July he was in the Mediterranean.

To return, on the 27th of August Toulon was surrendered to Lord Hood, who at once dispatched Nelson to Naples to negotiate for troops to act as a garrison. On the 12th of September Nelson anchored in the Bay, and forthwith set about his business. He was only required to hand dispatches to Sir William, but his eagerness induced him to do very much more. He remained four days, and in that short time received a promise of 6000 troops.

It was on this occasion that he first met Emma. The story is well known. Nelson, with his usual promptness, at

nce interviewed Sir William, and at the end of the conerence, delighted with the progress made, said, "You are man after my own heart; you do business in my own vay; I am now only captain, but if I live, I will be at the op of the tree." Flattered by the first half of this quaint emark, Sir William accepted the second half at its face alue. He invited Nelson to stay at the Embassy, and urried back to prepare Emma. "The captain I am bout to introduce to you," he informed her, "is a little an, and far from handsome, but he will live to be a great man. I know it from the talk I have had with him. Let him be put in the room prepared for Prince Augustus." Sir William's remark is supposed to have fired Emma's magination, but she was not likely to be unduly intrigued by a little, ugly captain, whose name was quite unknown to her. If she made him comfortable and went out of her way to be pleasant to his stepson, Josiah Nesbit, hat was merely because she liked entertaining and did t well.

This was one of the first, if not the very first occasion on which Emma came into contact with the British Navy, where she soon acquired immense popularity, being dubbed the Patroness of the Navy. Nor was this surprising. Emma was essentially the type of woman to appeal to seamen; she would be just as popular nowadays. Sailors are proverbially simple and susceptible. They accept women very much at their own value, and are overawed by a reserved manner. What appeals to them is an open, friendly nature, and a touch of vulgarity or flamboyance adds fuel to the fire. Emma would have felt thoroughly in her element, and not the less so owing to the fact that the sailors were unencumbered with their wives. There was every prospect of her becoming the darling of the Fleet, but there is not the least reason to suppose that in the midst of her successes at Court she paid undue attention to these very easy conquests.

The effect which Emma had on Nelson is another matter. While there is not the faintest evidence that he fell in love with her, it is impossible to believe that he was wholly unattracted. He was not only young but very susceptible, and even three years later he was able to write, in jest no doubt, but with a certain element of truth, "Tell —— that I possess his place in Mr Palmer's box [at the theatre], but he did not tell me all its charms, that generally some of the handsomest ladies in Bath are partakers in the box, and was I a bachelor I would not answer for being tempted; but as I am possessed of everything which is valuable in a wife, I have no occasion to think beyond a pretty face." In September 1793 he had been absent from his valuable wife for nine months, engaged on arduous work without respite or relief. The luxury of being ashore, the elation of being successful, and the glow of Emma's magnetic presence must have driven his rebellious mind to think just a little beyond Emma's pretty face. He thought sufficiently to inform Fanny that "Lady Hamilton has been wonderfully kind and good to Josiah. She is a young woman of amiable manners, and who does honour to the station to which she is raised"—information which refers to actions and character rather than looks, and is significant for its complete silence on Emma's conduct to himself. Probably, as most other young men would have done whose wives did not fully satisfy them, he looked at Emma with a vague regret, a sort of half-formed wish that he had not married in such a hurry. Not that he would have formulated the wish explicitly, and if he had never met Emma again the adventure would have been forgotten. But it was enough to make an impression which would serve as a foundation for other and stronger feelings when the occasion arose. It was enough to make him write in his bread-and-butter letter, "I assure you I have the highest sense of your and Lady Hamilton's kindness, and shall rejoice in an opportunity of returning it"—a sentiment which refers,

as his letter to his wife did not, to Emma's kindness to himself.

So Nelson came and went and Emma continued to grow in favour at Court. We have a small glimpse of her in the journal of Lady Webster—a clever, disappointed woman, who delighted in using her sharp tongue. Later on, when she had been divorced by her husband and, as Lady Holland, was feeling some of the odium which attached to a lost reputation, she inveighed more bitterly against Emma. Now, in the days of mere disappointment, all she could find to say was, "We passed the evening at Caserta with the Hamiltons; their house was not large enough to hold us all, and I lodged in Hackhert's house. Milady sang Nina, Paisiello's music; her vile discordant screaming took off the whole effect of his simple melody." In spite of her distaste for Emma's singing, she visited them again in the next year (1794) and recorded briefly that "the Hamiltons were as tiresome as ever; he as amorous, she as vulgar."

Meanwhile, a letter to Greville, written in June 1793, gives us Emma's own account of her life at this period. It contains her first mention of politics, but also shows that she was far too fully occupied with entertaining and study to give a thought to the graver issues of life. As for exerting any influence, Emma never so much as hints at the possibility.

Emma to Greville.

"CASERTA.

"*June* 2, 1793.

"I shou'd have answerd your kind letter sooner but I have not had time to write to any of my freinds these five months, which I am sorry for, as they may accuse me of neglect & ingratitude, which if they do, it will be a wrong accusition, for I litterally have been so busy with the English, the Court & my home duties, as to prevent me doing things I had much at heart to do.

"For political reasons we have lived eight months at Caserta, that is, making this our constant residence & going twice a week to town to give dinners, balls &c. &c. returning here at 2 or 3 a clock in the morning after the fatige of a dinner of fifty, & ball & supper of 3 hundred, then to dress early in the morning to go to Court to dinner at twelve a clock as the Royal Family dine early & they have done Sir Wm. & me the honner to invite us very very often. Our house at Caserta as been like an inn this winter as we have had partys that have come either to see the environs or have been invited to Court. We had the Duchess of Ancaster several days ; it is but 3 days since the Devonshire familly has left us & we had fifty in familly for four days at Caserta. Tis true we dined every day at Court or at some Casino of the King for you cannot immagine how good our King & Queen as been to the principal English who have been here, particularly to Lord and Ly. Palmerstone, Cholmondlys, Devonshire, Ly. Spencer, Ly. Besboroug, Ly. Plymouth, Sir G & Lady Webster & I have carried the Ladies to the Queen very often, as she as permitted me to go to her very often in private, which I do & the reason why we stay now here, is I have promised the Queen to remain as long as she does, which will be tell the tenth of July. In the evenings I go to her & we are tete a tete 2 or 3 hours ; sometimes we sing, yesterday the King and me sung duetts for 3 hours, *it was but bad as he sings like a king* ; today the Princess Royal of Sweden comes to Court to take leave of their Majestys. Sir W & me are invited to dinner with her. She is an amiable princess & as lived very much with us ; we have given her several dinners, balls &c. &c. for she loves dancing dearly. The other ministers wives have not shewd her the least attention because she did not pay them the first visit, as she travels under the name of Countess of Wasa. In consequence the Queen as not asked them to dinner to day & her My. told me I had done very well in waiting on her

R.H. the moment she arrived; however the ministers wives are very fond of me as the see I have no pretensions nor do I abuse of her Majestys goodness & she observed the other night at Court at Naples we had a drawing room in honner of the Empress having brought a son. I had been with the Queen the night before *alone en famille* laughing, singing, &c. &c. &c. but at the drawing room I kept my distance & pay'd the Queen as much respect as tho I had never seen her before which pleased her much, but she shewd me great distinction that night and told me several times how she admired my good conduct. I onely tell you this to shew & convince you I shall never change but allways be simple & natural.

"You may immagine how happy my dear, dear Sir William is & I can assure you if ever I had any little teazing caprice it is so intirely gone that neither Sir William or me remembers it & he will tell you the same: endeed you cannot immagine our happiness, it is not to be described, we are not an hour in the day seperable, we live more like lovers than husband & wife, *as husbands & wives go nowadays.* Good Lord deliver me, & the English are geting as bad as the Italians & some few excepted. I study very hard & have made great progress in French and musick & I have had all my songs set for the viola that Sir Wm. may accompany me which as pleased him much so that we now study together; the English garden is going on very fast, the King & Queen go there every day. Sir Wm. & me are there every morning at seven a clock, sometimes dine there & allways drink tea, in short, it is Sir Wms. favourite child and boath him & me are now studying botany but not to make ourselves pedantical prigs to shew our learning like some of our traveling neighbours, but for our own pleasure. Greffer is as happy as a prince, poor Flint the messanger was killed going from hence; I am very sorry, he was lodged in our house & I had really a love for him. I sent him to see Pompea, Portici and all our delightful

environs & sent all his daughters presents, poor man. The Queen expressed great sorrow. Pray let me know if his familly are provided for as I may get something for them perhaps. Addio. Love me & believe me your sincere friend,

" E. HAMILTON.

" Pray dont fail to send the enclosed."

CHAPTER XIII

WAR

(1)

Whatever influence Emma had on politics, it was largely the events of 1794 which prepared the stage. Hitherto, for all the Queen's fears, the war had been at a distance; now it approached much nearer. The mixed garrison at Toulon had proved wholly ineffective, so that the French recovered the city in December 1793, throwing open the road to Italy. This road lay along the coast and could not be used with impunity so long as the English fleet was master of the Mediterranean. But to remain master the fleet needed some base nearer than Gibraltar or Naples—the two alternatives now that Toulon was lost. Corsica was chosen, and Nelson spent the first half of the year assisting at the capture of Bastia and Calvi, the two Corsican fortresses occupied by the French. Demands were made on Naples for aid in their reduction. The fact of these demands led Emma in later years to make a ridiculous claim. She averred that Sir John Jervis (better known as Lord St Vincent) "kept writing to me for everything he wanted, which I procur'd to be promptly provided." The reduction of Corsica was actually carried out under Lord Hood, but this is an unimportant slip. The question is whether her claim was in any way justified.

There exists a letter which Sir William wrote to Greville in April 1794, almost exactly half-way between the beginning and end of the operations, in which he states that a Jacobin conspiracy to kill the King of Naples "stops for the present the Neapolitan squadron that was going

to join Lord Hood off Bastia. I am employed in sending mortars and other artillery stores, of which Lord Hood is in want for the attack of Bastia, and the *Romney* is now taking them on board." This letter amply confirms what one would suppose, that Lord Hood applied, not to Emma, but to the Neapolitan Government, and that the application went through the usual channel of the British Ambassador. It is not, however, impossible that Emma did her best to forward comforts, whether of food or clothes, to the troops in Corsica. If so, she did no more than might reasonably be expected, not merely of an Ambassador's wife, but of any Englishwoman, and certainly nothing to justify the sweeping claim of later years. Whether she sent supplies or not, Corsica was reduced by August 1794, at the cost incidentally of Nelson's right eye. More important than the part she played was the fact that the sudden stress of war showed Sir William that he was older and more frail than he suspected. As early as January he told Emma that the news of the death of an old schoolfellow "gave me a little twist; but I have for some time perceived that my friends, with whom I spent my younger days, have been dropping around me." By April, when busy with the supplies for Corsica, he found the pressure of work beginning to tell on his health, and admitted that "I am worn out with having been obliged, all at once, to write long letters to Lord Hood, and also a long despatch to Lord Grenville on the present critical situation of Naples." By July he was "sensible that the course of nature will not allow me many years more of enjoyment in this world." In the summer he suffered considerably from diarrhœa, and on recovering health, deserted his post to recuperate at Castellamare. His ill-health continued on and off well into the next year.

This growing inclination on Sir William's part to throw in his hand, coupled with the increasing intimacy of the Queen with Emma, naturally led the Queen to make

greater use of Emma, not as an adviser, but as a channel of communication between herself and the ailing "chevalier." The practice grew, having the added advantage of secrecy. Emma became the recipient of endless notes from the Queen, some purely personal, but many containing information intended for Sir William's eyes. To this extent Emma became involved in politics, and, as she said, forced against her will to take some interest—but it was the interest of a post office which possessed some affection for the writer and a great love of notoriety.

Of Emma's own correspondence during this year little remains but two letters to Greville. One, written towards the end of the year, shows that Emma was entering politics as an ardent supporter of the Queen and an indiscriminate opponent of all things French.

Emma to Greville.

"CASERTA,

"*Decber.* 18*th.* 1794.

"I have only time to write you a few lines by the Neapolitan courier who will give you this. He comes back soon so pray send me by him some Ribbands, & fourteen yards of fine muslin work'd for a gownd or fine leno: ask any lady what leno is & she will tell you & pray pay Hackwoods & put it down to Sir Williams account with his banker, he told me I might, for I have so many occasions to spend my money that my 2 hundred pounds will scarcely do for me a constant attendance at court now once & generally twice a day & I must be well dress'd. You know how far 2 hundred will go. Today we expect the Prince Augustus from Rome, he is to be lodged at the Pallace here and with us in town. Tomorrow we have a great dinner at Court for the Prince. The Queen invited me last night herself. I carried Lord Bristol to her & we pass'd four hours in an inchantment, no person can be so charming

as the Queen, she is everything one can wish, the best mother, wife & friend in the world. I live constantly with her & have done intimately so for 2 years & I have never in all that time seen any thing but goodness & sincerity in her & if ever you hear any lyes about her contridick them & if you shou'd see a cursed book writen by a vile french dog with her character in it dont believe one word. She lent it me last night & I have, by reading the infamous calomny, put myself quite out of humer that so good & virtus a princess shou'd be so infamously described.

" Lord Bristol is with us at Caserta ; he passes one weak at Naples & one with us ; he is very found of me & very kind, he is very entertaining & dashes at every thing, nor does he mind King or Queen when he is inclined to shew his talents. I am now taking lessons from Willico and make a great progress, nor do I slacken in any of my studys. We have been here 3 months & remain four or five months longer. We go to Naples every now & then, I ride on horseback. The Queen has had the goodness to supply me with horses, an equery & her own servant in her livery every day, in short, if I was her daughter she cou'd not be kinder to me & I love her with my whole soul.

" My dear Sir William is very well & as fond of me as ever & I am, as women generally are, ten thousand times fonder of him than I was & you wou'd be delighted to see how happy we are, no quarelling, nor crossness nor caprices, all nonsense is at an end & every body that sees us are edified by our example of conjugal & domestick felicaty ; will you ever come & see us ; you shall be receved with kindness from us boath for we have boath obligations to you for having made us acquainted with each other. Excuse the haist with which I write for we are going to Capua to meet the Prince Augustus. Do send me a plan how I cou'd situate little Emma, poor thing, for I wish it.

" E. Hamilton."

(2)

The other letter was one of congratulation on Greville's appointment to office, itself the result of events in England which ultimately had a great effect upon Emma.

The French Revolution could not fail to bear fruit in England. The ideas of liberty and reform were not discoveries of the French, but for years past had been canvassed by English writers and English thinkers. It was therefore no wonder that the outburst in France should at first touch a sympathetic chord in English hearts, since it seemed to be the flowering of the noblest English ideals. "A new world," said Hazlitt, "was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned on the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness of surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of that ladder which was once set up on the earth, and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this new-begotten hope; and the path that led to human happiness seemed as plain as the pictures in the *Pilgrim's Progress* leading to Paradise."

There is more than a touch of irony in this enthusiasm of the eighteenth century for its destroyer. Good or bad, the society of those days was a very perfect thing, and it was precisely that society which the French Revolution was to overthrow, with all its beauty, with all its elegance, with all its absolute belief in itself. Society lapped down the poison, and at first mistook the beginnings of disintegration for the stirrings of immortality. Burke alone stood out against the new movement, but his opposition merely fanned the flames of enthusiasm. His *Reflections* did no more than bring a flood of answers, some sentimental, some profound, and all culminating in the *Rights of Man*—a "best-seller" written by a man of the people

who had been a common sailor, a staymaker and an exciseman in turn. Thomas Paine

It was the course of events in France that clouded this fair flush of enthusiasm, and the reaction was all the stronger because the hopes had been so high. By the end of 1792 the cause of reform in England was coupled in men's minds with the excesses in France. By 1793 even the gentle Cowper was moved to write, "I will tell you what the French have done. They have made me weep for a King of France, which I never thought to do, and they have made me sick of the very name of liberty, which I never thought to be."

By degrees reaction turned to panic, and panic called in repression. All popular movements were regarded by the Government with angry suspicion, and opposed by tyranny. The year 1794, famous as the climax of the terror in France, was scarcely less notable as the climax of the repressive measures in England. "There was not a city," said Coleridge, "no, not a town, in which a man suspected of holding democratic principles could move abroad without receiving some unpleasant proof of the hatred in which his supposed opinions were held by the great majority of the people."

In short the French Revolution had succeeded in altering the whole outlook of society, in sowing the seeds of class hatred, and in deepening the antagonism between political parties. These were matters that escaped the notice of Emma and her husband, who never understood that the England to which they returned was not the England which they had left. Much of Emma's misfortune sprang from this very cause.

Greville, it need hardly be said, was fishing in these troubled waters. In the earlier years, being still out of Parliament, he fastened his attention on the milking of Sir William's Welsh cow. As already related, he had thrust an Act of Parliament on his uncle in 1790. Two

years later he found the estate was producing exactly half the estimated value, and admitted that "it is now come to a crisis." He asked for authority to raise fresh capital when he "would undertake to do great things" (unspecified); the great plan (equally vague) would begin instantly; and "every subsequent step would tend to its perfection." The prospect was not without its merits because, as Greville quite frankly stated, "I have set down without mystery everything that you can do for me at present and in future without diminution of present income." The letter arrived when Sir William was in a low state of health, and worried him a good deal. However, he authorised expenditure on an inn and a landing-place, with the result that towards the end of the year Greville was able to assure him that "the inn cannot pay good interest, yet the adjoining property will indemnify you with the prospect of greater advances."

The correspondence is an example of the amazing effrontery which Greville could display when there was no fear of his being put to shame in public or losing money in private. Every step he took, while possibly opening up future prospects for himself as heir, sensibly diminished the present revenues. In spite of this, he pestered his uncle without ceasing for further powers, affirming on each occasion that nothing would induce him to hurt Sir William's immediate interests.

The unfortunate Sir William was reduced to all manner of shifts to stave off the requests, especially as Greville ignored hints and was quite unaffected by snubs. "I am," he wrote at last, "like the Irish Member of Parliament who, when a great expense was proposed for the benefit of futurity, desired to know what futurity had done for us." So far as Greville's schemes represented futurity, Sir William gave the answer himself in October 1794. "I do not see," he complained, "that one farthing has been paid into Ross's hands from the estate these two years." In

a word, Greville's activities halved the income between 1790 and 1792, and completely swallowed it up between 1792 and 1794.

Meanwhile, largely owing to his uncle's efforts, Greville once more obtained a seat in Parliament. The war with France had broken out, the reaction against reform had begun, and Greville saw his chance of making peace with Pitt—that stripling whom he had so hopelessly undervalued some ten years earlier. In 1794 the secession of the reformers—which had begun when Burke broke with Fox—became general; they went over in a body to Pitt, partly out of the patriotic wish to show a united front in time of war, and partly out of sheer panic. They accepted the English Terror, and endured very light-heartedly the cutting sarcasms of Sheridan. Greville, needless to say, jumped at the opportunity, and, changing sides in the House, was rewarded with the post of Vice-Chamberlain. He wrote a smug, complacent letter to Emma in which, borrowing Emma's own phrase, he said, "You have seen me in prosperity and in adversity; and know how much I estimate worldly concerns." Emma ought to have known, but she betrayed no sign of irony in her reply.

Emma to Greville.

"CASTELLAMARE.
"*Sepbre.* 16. 1794.

"I congratulate you, my dear Mr Greville, with all my heart on your appointment to the vice chamberlain-ship. You have well merited it & all your friends must be happy at a change so favorable, not onely for your pecuniary circumstances as for the honner of the situation; may you long enjoy it with every happiness that you deserve & *I speak from my heart.* I don't know a better, honester or more amiable worthy man than yourself & it is a great deal for me to say for what ever I think I am not apt to pay compliments.

"My dear Sir William as had the disorder that me & all Naples have had since the eruption, a violent diarea that reduced him to so very low an ebb that I was very much alarmed for him notwithstanding I thought I shou'd have gone with him, but thank God, we are here as happy as possible in the Queens palace, enjoying every comfort & happiness that good health, royall favour & domestick happiness can give us, so much so, the other day, the aniversary of our marriage, Sir Wm. told me he loved me better than ever & had never for one moment repented. Think of my feelings in that moment when I cou'd with truth say the same to him. I gave here that day a little fete here. Lord & Lady Plymouth &c. &c. came down here & I never saw Sir William nor never was so happy myself. I tell you this because I know you will rejoice at it. I will write soon & send to you to setle with Mrs Hackwood, but all the things were spoilt & I had no right to pay for them, but I will setle it & pray go & tell her so; for the other affair I will write to you fully and as this is a letter of congratulation, nothing shall disturb our happy ideas. I wish you cou'd send me an English riding hat, very fashionable, but I desire you to put it to Sir Wms. account. We have company to day from Naples & I cannot write more than that I am my dear Mr Grevilles ever sincere & affectionate friend,

"EMMA HAMILTON.

"*P.S.*—Mothers love to you; she is the comfort of our lives & is our house keeper. Sir Wm. doats on her. Give my love to the Col."

(3)

To return to the war. In October 1794 Lord Hood returned to England and his place was taken by Admiral Hotham, who held the command for just over a year. It almost seems as though Fate specially arranged the details

of this year to indulge in a delicate irony. Nelson was a severe critic of Hotham's actions. In the preceding June Hotham had, in Nelson's eyes, lost an opportunity of attacking and destroying a small part of the French fleet—a loss of opportunity which Nelson, with exemplary moderation, dubbed as unfortunate. Twice more Hotham was to throw away opportunities. In March 1795 Nelson, by a brilliant action with the Ça Ira, paved the way for a general engagement, and urged his view personally on the Admiral. "We must be contented," was Hotham's chilling reply, "we have done very well." Nelson's private comment was stronger than the year before. "Sure I am, had I commanded our fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French fleet would have graced my triumph, or I should have been in a confounded scrape"—the youthful version of an alternative that appeared afterwards in many dresses.

A further opportunity in July was lost in a maze of highly correct manœuvres, which left Nelson dissatisfied, if not disgusted. In his eyes Hotham had failed three times in one year, not in the sense of courting disaster, but in failing to run justifiable risks for great results. The memory of these failures, especially after his own successes, had much to do with his attitude towards superiors whom he regarded as inefficient. The ironical part is that Nelson only recalled the failures, and not their cause, or at least their reputed cause. Hotham had fallen under the influence of two women, first Signora Grassini and then Mrs Newnham; it was commonly reported throughout Italy that he failed to make the most of his opportunities because he was dallying in the arms of his charmer, and Mrs Newnham was spoken of as the commander of the fleet. Whether this had anything to do with his timid tactics or not, at least it had a good deal to do with his recall.

Nelson was dispatched immediately after the partial action of July 1795 to co-operate with the Austrians on the Riviera.

(4)

The position in the early months of 1795 can now be summed up. Naples was in alliance with England and secretly horrified at France; the Queen was growing daily more intimate with Emma; Sir William was finding his task increasingly irksome. Meanwhile the French armies were gaining one success after another, and threatening to pour down the whole length of Italy. It was at this crisis that in April 1795, while Sir William lay ill in bed, Emma received a note in which the Queen said, "I send you a letter in cypher come from Spain, from Galatone [Neapolitan Ambassador at Madrid], which you must return to me before 12 o'clock so that the King may find it again. There are some very interesting facts for the English Government which I am delighted to communicate to them, to show my attachment to them and my confidence in the worthy chevalier, whom I only beg not to compromise me." This cypher letter contained news of Spain's intention to make peace with France—an event which actually occurred three months later.

This was not the first time that Emma had received political notes; nor was its dispatch out of keeping with the policy or practice of the Neapolitan Court. Allusion has already been made to the fact that as early as 1779 the King voluntarily informed Sir William of Spain's intention to join France in a war against Great Britain. Then it was a matter of friendship alone; now it was a question of policy as well.

The next year Spain decided to enter into a full offensive and defensive alliance with France. The treaty was signed on the 19th of August and ratified on the 12th of September.

Subsequently Emma claimed, and Nelson declared, that she had rendered a signal service to England by obtaining early news of this intended alliance. She may have been

referring to the cypher letter and the peace of 1795, in which case her "service" was of the slightest. But her own versions—she gave two—and Nelson's all suggest that she was referring to the alliance of 1796 and a royal letter. In Emma's more detailed, and incidentally less trustworthy, version she stated that "it happen'd that I discover'd a courier had brought the King of Naples a private letter from the King of Spain. I prevail'd on the Queen to take it from his pocket unseen. We found it to contain the King of Spain's intention to withdraw from the Coalition, and join the French against England. My husband at this time lay dangerously ill. I prevail'd on the Queen to allow my taking a copy, with which I immediately despatch'd a messenger to my Lord Grenville, taking all the necessary precautions; for his safe arrival then became very difficult, and altogether cost me about £400 paid out of my private purse."

In her less flamboyant account she merely stated that she "had an opportunity of obtaining, and actually did obtain, the King of Spain's letter to the King of Naples expressive of his intention to declare war against England. This important document, your Majesty's memorialist delivered to her husband, Sir William Hamilton, who immediately transmitted it to your Majesty's Ministers."

If Emma had always been contented with the latter version, probably no one would have challenged her claim, and the sole question would have been the value of her action. Such evidence as exists goes to prove the general outlines of her story. Charles of Spain was continually writing to his brother of Naples; the Queen was in the habit of sending information to Emma; and lastly, on the 21st of September 1796, Emma wrote to Greville, "we have not time to write to you as we have been 3 days and nights writing to send by this courier letters of *consequence* for our government. They ought to be gratefull to Sir William and *myself in particular* as my situation at this Court is *very extraordinary* and what no person as yet

arrived at." It is legitimate to suppose that the "letters of consequence" contained the information to which Nelson referred. But there is no reason to suppose that Emma used any persuasion with the Queen, who was unlikely to need pressing. Nor is it in the least probable that Emma spent large sums out of her privy purse. She herself in one version says that Sir William transmitted the letter, and we know from other sources that her allowance was £200 a year, eked out by occasional presents from her husband. In a word, Emma's service in 1796 was much the same as it had been in 1795; she was merely the channel through which the Queen sent news to Sir William. We may believe that she took an intelligent interest and helped her ailing husband as any other wife might be expected to do; but she initiated nothing and ran no risk. Had the letter been of tremendous moment, she could hardly have claimed any credit.

But was the letter of tremendous moment? Did it give any information that was either unsuspected or unknown? Spain and England had long been hereditary foes, and as recently as 1790 war had nearly broken out over the affair of Nootka Sound. It is true that in the general coalition against the French revolutionaries Spain and England had been on the same side, but from the moment that Toulon was recaptured, Spain had been growing steadily more disgusted. She looked with suspicious eyes on England's rising power in the Mediterranean, and when the Coalition broke up began to regard the war as a maritime and colonial struggle of the traditional type, in which the interests of Spain lay with France rather than England. It was probable enough that Spain would change sides. Certainly the English ministers expected it, and as early as June 1796 Pitt was writing of his expectations that Spain and the Northern Powers would join France and Holland. The fleet in the Mediterranean and the English in Italy were all discussing the probabilities,

and on the 29th of August, Wyndham, the British Ambassador at Florence, wrote definitely to Nelson, "a treaty of offensive and defensive alliance between France and Spain was signed at Paris on the 5th of last month." Wyndham was wrong as to his dates but right as to his facts, and what he knew, the English Government must have known shortly after. The treaty was signed on the 19th of August and ratified on the 12th of September. Three days later the English Government issued orders for the seizure of all Spanish ships in English ports. All this took place before the "letters of consequence" were dispatched from Naples, and it is largely on these "letters of consequence" that Emma's claim rests. From whatever point of view, therefore, this matter is regarded, Emma's service appears to be inconsiderable, though none the less praiseworthy, amounting to little more than the punctual delivery of the Queen's messages to her husband.

In any event the general position seemed desperate from the Neapolitan point of view. Naples had already signed an armistice on the 24th of June. On the 11th of October she entered into a formal treaty with France, under which she accepted a *rôle* of neutrality, agreed to pay an indemnity, and promised to forbid the entrance of more than four enemy (*i.e.* English) vessels into her ports at one time. She was influenced by two considerations—first, by the continued defeats of the Austrians in the north of Italy which led to the signing of peace between Austria and France in the following year, and secondly, by the decision of the British Government to evacuate the Mediterranean. Orders to this effect reached Sir John Jervis on the 25th of September, 1796, and were the immediate cause of the Neapolitan submission. Naples had always been vacillating because it was weak, but at heart it was violently opposed to revolutionary principles, as Nelson fully understood. He felt great compunction for this well-meaning but very

ineffective ally. "I feel more than all for Naples," he wrote, "The King of Naples is a greater sacrifice than Corsica." This very lively feeling of sympathy for Naples was not without influence on his future conduct, adding yet more bias to the wishes of Emma. It should not be forgotten.

Nor should his growing reputation in Italy be forgotten. Nelson with his naïve love of popular applause tells the story of a man who addressed a letter to "Horatio Nelson, Genoa." On being asked how he could direct in such a manner, his answer in a large party was, "Sir, there is but one Horatio Nelson in the world." And Sir William in March 1796 wrote to him, "When I reported to Lord Grenville, in my last despatch, the letter I received from you lately, I could not help giving you the epithet of 'that brave officer, Captain Nelson.' If you do not deserve it, I know not who does." Emma's interest in "that brave officer, Captain Nelson," would naturally have been far greater than her interest in "a little man and far from handsome."

CHAPTER XIV

THE BATTLE OF THE NILE

The entry of Spain into the war as an ally of France, and the British evacuation of the Mediterranean, were followed swiftly by the victory off Cape St Vincent, which gave Sir John Jervis his earldom and Nelson his K.C.B. Five months later, in July 1797, Nelson lost his right arm at the abortive attack on Teneriffe. He returned to England in despondency, fully convinced that his career was at an end and suffering acutely from the physical pain of a bad amputation.

By this time England alone was left of all the active enemies of France, and England herself was in a bad way. Apart from the burden of the war, and the fact that she was without allies, apart from the weariness of the people and the repressive measures which bred discontent, there was the appalling thought that the navy, on which alone the safety of England depended, was disaffected. In the middle of 1797 there were mutinies at Spithead, the Nore, and Yarmouth. In a sense the danger was all the slighter because the disaffection was founded on genuine grievances. If the sailors' demands were met there was no reason to doubt their loyalty. Their attitude was aptly described in a scrawl that reached the Admiralty on the back of a political pamphlet: "Dam my eyes if I understand your lingo or long proclamations, but, in short, give us our due at once, and no more of it, till we go in search of the rascals, the enemys of our country." But the Admiralty could not be expected to know this.

Faced with all these difficulties, Great Britain faltered,

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and in the summer of 1797 made overtures for peace. Fortunately it was Napoleon's fixed belief that "either our Government must destroy the English monarchy, or must expect itself to be destroyed by the corruption and intrigue of those active islanders." Consequently the terms which France was prepared to offer were too humiliating to be accepted. Great Britain drew in its belt, and decided not merely to continue the war, but to take the offensive. There were reasons and to spare for this grasping of the nettle. Bonaparte had stated his policy quite baldly: "let us concentrate all our activity on our fleet and destroy England. That done, Europe is at our feet." He seemed only too able to translate his policy into action, since the alliance with Holland and Spain gave him a numerical preponderance of ships; the Mediterranean had become nothing more than a French lake; and the English Navy was in the throes of mutiny.

Meanwhile an expedition was being fitted out at Toulon under an impenetrable shroud of secrecy. Only six men, the five members of the Directory and Bonaparte himself, knew its object. In accordance with the old adage *Omne ignotum pro magnifico*, these preparations kept the world in a state of suspense. There was hardly a nation that did not regard itself as directly threatened. Better by far attack the fleet at the outset than sit still under this vague and ominous threat.

Accordingly, on the 29th of April 1798, the Cabinet ordered St Vincent to thwart the sailing of the expedition. He was given discretion as to the actual steps to be taken, but he was left in no sort of doubt as to the feeling in England or the wishes of the Admiralty. Earl Spencer, the First Lord, told him in a private letter that "the circumstances in which we now find ourselves oblige us to take a measure of a more decided and hazardous complexion than we should otherwise have thought ourselves justified in taking; but when you are apprised that the appearance of a British

squadron in the Mediterranean is a condition on which the fate of Europe may at this moment be stated to depend, you will not be surprised that we are disposed to strain every nerve, and incur considerable hazard in effecting it." After discussing the various possibilities, Earl Spencer continued, " I cannot at the same time help feeling how much depends on its success, and how absolutely necessary it is at this time to run some risk, in order, if possible, to bring about a new system of affairs in Europe, which shall save us all from being overrun by the exorbitant power of France. In this view of the subject, it is impossible not to perceive how much depends on the exertions of the great Continental powers."

St Vincent decided to entrust the task to Nelson. Under the terms of his orders he might demand supplies at the mouth of his guns at any ports in the Mediterranean, " those of the Island of Sardinia alone excepted."

Entering the Mediterranean, he met with a series of disasters. The first was a violent storm on the 20th of May, which not only destroyed the masts of his flagship and dispersed his fleet, but enabled Bonaparte to slip by. With difficulty Nelson struggled to the harbour of St Peter's at the extreme south of Sardinia. There the Governor informed him that as Sardinia was allied to France, the fleet must not remain, but added that as he had no power to force them out, they would doubtless do as they pleased, and with this protest, supplied all the fleet wanted. The attitude adopted is enlightening. When he had refitted, Nelson learnt that his frigates under Captain Hope, believing him to be so much disabled that he would have to return to Gibraltar, had left the Mediterranean. The lack of frigates nearly wrecked the whole expedition.

On the 5th of June, being by now reinforced with more ships of the line, Nelson began his long chase of Bonaparte, which did not end till the 1st of August 1798. As a first

step he sailed towards Sicily, sending Troubridge to Naples to find out what co-operation he could expect from that Kingdom.

At all crucial points in the history of this period we find a claim staked out by Emma in her later days. The interest of Emma's life lies outside and beyond these so-called services; she would attract or repel as much if she had never made a claim, and she would have been as intimately bound up with the hurried and exciting events of a great age. They must be discussed, but it must also be remembered that she performed each "service" at the time with a becoming spirit of helpfulness. The idea that she was moulding destinies or changing the course of history was the later fruit of a sick and swollen brain. With this caveat it is possible to return to the particular service arising here, and as a preliminary something must be said of Neapolitan politics.

In January 1798 the Marquis of Gallo had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs to please the French. He was in no sense a strong man though he had some diplomatic ability; but he was admirably suited for the part he had to play. Naples was in mortal terror of the French. She believed that the expedition being fitted out at Toulon was aimed against herself; she knew that the French armies in Italy were gradually spreading southward; she doubted the French assurance that the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies was not their objective. She also knew that Austria was something of a broken reed, and could at best be relied on only to protect the kingdom by land. What Naples wanted was also protection by sea, which England alone could give. Accordingly, in the early months of 1798 Naples sent urgent appeals to England, and Naples was specifically mentioned in Nelson's orders as one of the places to be protected. But while Naples was only too anxious for the presence of a British fleet, she was almost equally anxious to give the French no cause for complaint.

After all, the English had evacuated the Mediterranean two years before and might do so again. It was far better to temporise, it was far safer to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds until it was quite certain which would win. For such a policy the vacillating Gallo was a perfect minister.

But Nelson wanted to know where he stood. He wrote to Sir William asking what co-operation he might expect from Naples in the matter of supplies, frigates, and pilots, and he followed up the letter by sending Troubridge in person. This insistence on a definite answer put the Neapolitan statesmen in a difficult position, and Gallo had returned evasive answers. When Troubridge and Hardy arrived at about 6 o'clock on the 17th of June, Sir William first showed them Gallo's reply, and then took them in person to Acton, where, in the words of his official dispatch "we did more business in half an hour than we should have done in a week in the usual official way. . . . I prevailed upon General Acton to write himself an order in the name of His Sicilian Majesty, directed to the governors of every port in Sicily, to supply the King's ships with all sorts of provisions, and in case of an action to permit the British seamen, sick or wounded, to be landed and taken proper care of in their ports. . . . Captain Troubridge did not stay two hours on shore, and went off perfectly contented with General Acton, who was as he said a true man of business rarely to be met with." In a later note to Nelson Sir Willaim said, "The letter which Captain Troubridge and myself got from General Acton, I look upon as a sort of credential one for you upon Sicily, and as that island to my certain knowledge is most partial to Great Britain, you will be sure of every aid from that quarter." At the same time he forwarded a copy of Gallo's official reply, which will "shew you on what grounds we stand here at this moment." The position, as Nelson very well realised, was that Naples wished him every success, and was prepared to do everything it could, but dared not take any open step.

The help they would give him must be given under a show of protest.

Meanwhile Emma had been busy. Apparently while the two captains were with Acton, she herself went to see the Queen, and as might be expected, found her exactly what Troubridge found Acton, full of the warmest wishes for Nelson's success, and quite ready to go as far as she could without actually giving France a *casus belli*. Emma, by way of adding encouragement, gave Nelson an account of her interview. The letter ran as follows :—

Emma to Nelson.

" (*17th June* 1798)

" My dear Admiral,—I write in a hurry as Captain T. Carrol stays on Monarch. God bless you, and send you victorious, and that I may see you bring back Buonaparte with you. Pray send Captain Hardy out to us, for I shall have a fever with anxiety. The Queen desires me to say everything that's kind, and bids me say with her whole heart and soul she wishes you victory. God bless you, my dear Sir. I will not say how glad I shall be to see you. Indeed I cannot describe to you my feelings on your being so near us. Ever, Ever, dear Sir, Your affte. and gratefull

" Emma Hamilton."

During the day the Queen sent Emma a note. What it contained we can only guess, but a not unreasonable guess is that it contained the Queen's version of the interview, repeating her good wishes and her assurance that supplies would by one means or another be forthcoming. Emma sent it to Nelson with the following note :

" Dear Sir, I send you a letter I have received this moment from the Queen. *Kiss it*, and send it back by Bowen, as I am bound not to give any of her letters, Ever your, Emma."

Nelson returned it the same day.

Up to this point Emma had shown commendable zeal, and had given Nelson evidence that the Queen sympathised with him. But she had done nothing more, and the incident would probably have been forgotten but for Nelson's statement, written on the morning of Trafalgar, some seven years later: "The British fleet under my command could never have returned the second time to Egypt had not Lady Hamilton's influence with the Queen of Naples caused letters to be wrote to the Governor of Syracuse, that he was to encourage the fleet being supplied with everything, should they put into any port in Sicily. We put into Syracuse, and received every supply; went to Egypt and destroyed the French fleet."

The importance of Nelson's statement must not be over-emphasised. No doubt he fully believed what he wrote, but it is palpable that while he was sailing the Mediterranean he could not have first-hand knowledge of what was happening at Naples. The actual facts will give surer grounds on which to judge the extent of Emma's service.

After Troubridge had returned with Acton's order, Nelson sailed towards Egypt, searching as he went for the French Fleet. Meanwhile he wrote vigorous letters to Sir William, setting out all the arguments he could think of, to persuade Naples into decisive action. Though he scarcely realised it, his arguments, however sound from the military point of view, were calculated to keep Naples on the fence. "The French," so ran his line of argument, "know as well as you and I do that their Sicilian Majesties called for our help to save them—even this is crime enough with the French"; they are now attacking Malta, and "Malta is the direct road to Sicily"; if the British fleet is to fight successfully "there will be needed things which I have not, fire-ships, bomb vessels and gun-boats"; Naples should supply these and render victory certain; without them "the British may be crippled in their attempt, and

forced to leave the Mediterranean"; "and then Sicily and Naples are lost." If it was all such a matter of touch and go, Naples was most certainly going to do nothing but hope for the best and pray for Nelson's success; openly they would refuse him help, but they would gladly yield to any show of force. This was the feeling, not merely of the Queen, but of the whole country. And, returning for the moment to Nelson's codicil, it is significant that Nelson himself claimed simply that the Governor of Syracuse was to "encourage" the fleet to be supplied. This was precisely what Sir William meant when he spoke of Acton's order as "a sort of credential."

Nelson's letters had no effect, except that they procured a reply from Emma, which certainly does not suggest any active interference on the Queen's part nor show any deep political insight on Emma's. Her letter is as follows:

Emma to Nelson.

"NAPLES. *June 30th* 1798.

"DEAR SIR, I take the opportunity of Capt. Hope, to write a few lines to you, and thank you for your kind letter by Capn. Bowen.

"The Queen was much pleased, as I translated it for her; and charges me to thank you; and say, she prays for your honour and safety—victory she is sure you will have.

"We have still the regicide minister here, Garrat [French Ambassador]: the most impudent, insolent dog: making the most infamous demands every day; and I see plainly the Court of Naples must declare war, if they mean to save their country.

"*Her Majesty* sees and feels all you said in your letter to Sir William, dated off the Faro di Messina, in its true light; so does General Acton.

"But alas! their First Minister, Gallo, is a frivolous, ignorant, self-conceited coxcomb, that thinks of nothing

but his fine embroidered coat, ring and snuff-box; and half Naples thinks him half a Frenchman: and God knows, if one may judge of what he did in making the peace for the Emperor, he must either be very ignorant, or not attached to his master or the cause commun.

"The Queen and Acton cannot bear him, and consequently he cannot have much power: but still, a First Minister, although he may be a minister of smoke, yet he has always something; enough at least to do mischief.

"The Jacobins have all been lately declared innocent, after suffering four years imprisonment; and I know they all deserved to be hanged long ago: and since Garrat has been here, and through his insolent letters to Gallo, these pretty gentlemen, that had planned the death of their Majesties, are to be let out on society again.

"In short, I am afraid all is lost here; and I am grieved to the heart for our dear, charming Queen, who deserves a better Fate!

"I write to you, my dear Sir, in confidence and in a hurry.

"I hope you will not quit the Mediterranean without taking *us*. We have our leave, and everything ready, at a day's notice, to go; but yet I trust in God, and you, that we shall destroy those monsters before we go from hence. Surely their reign cannot last long.

"If you have any opportunity, write to us; pray do: you do not know how your letters comfort us.

"God bless you, my dear, dear Sir, and believe me, ever, you most sincerely obliged and attached friend,

"EMMA HAMILTON."

Meanwhile, as all the world knows, Nelson raced Bonaparte to Alexandria, arrived there first, and, finding the place empty, returned to Syracuse. He anchored there on the 19th of July. "With this harbour," wrote Sir Edward Berry, Nelson's Flag-Captain, "no person in the Fleet was

acquainted; but by the skill and judgment of the officers every ship safely got in, and immediately proceeded to get in water, etc., with all possible expedition. . . . Although there was no proper or regular watering-place, yet the great exertions of the officers and men enabled us to complete this necessary service in five days, and on the 25th the Squadron again put to sea." This account was written and published within a few months of the events, and is very circumstantial. Three points in particular should be noticed: first, all the ships proceeded immediately to take in water, etc.; secondly, owing to the lack of proper facilities, extra exertion was needed; and thirdly, the watering took five days.

On the 20th of July Nelson wrote to Sir William, giving an account of his fruitless search, and his future intentions. "In about six days," he added, "I shall sail from hence." On the 21st he wrote again, full of woe because "the messenger is returned from Cape Passaro; and says that your letters for me are returned to Naples. What a situation am I placed in. As yet I can learn nothing of the enemy." These letters show that for three days at least Nelson had no particular fault to find with the progress of watering. We do, as a matter of fact, know from other sources what happened. The Governor protested formally, but otherwise put no hindrance in the way—exactly as the Governor of Sardinia had done.

On the 22nd of July, however, Nelson wrote a couple of letters which had better speak for themselves. The first was addressed to Sir William.

"I have had so much said about the King of Naples' orders only to admit three or four of the ships of our fleet into his ports, that I am astonished. I understood that private orders at least would have been given for our free admission. If we are to be refused supplies, pray send me, by many vessels, an account, that I may in good time take the King's fleet to Gibraltar. Our treatment is scandalous

for a great nation to put up with, and the King's flag is insulted at every friendly port we look at.

"I am with the greatest respect etc.

"*P.S.*—I do not complain of the want of attention in individuals, for all classes of people are remarkably attentive to us."

The second was to Emma.

"My dear Madam,—I am so hurt at the treatment we received from the power we came to assist and fight for, that I am hardly in a situation to write a letter to an elegant body: therefore you must on this occasion forgive my want of those attentions which I am ever anxious to shew you. I wish to know your and Sir William's plans for coming down the Mediterranean, for if we are to be kicked at every port of the Sicilian dominions, the sooner we are gone, the better. Good God! how sensibly I feel our treatment. I have only to pray that I may find the French and throw all my vengeance on them."

The interesting point of the letters lies in the postscript to Sir William, which shows that whatever the official attitude might have been, no real obstacle was being placed in the way of the fleet. For the rest they show that Nelson was in a state of irritable nerves, a fact, as will shortly appear, that was in no sense surprising.

On this same 22nd of July, Nelson wrote yet a third letter, this time jointly to the two. It ran as follows:—

"My dear friends, Thanks to your exertions, we have victualled and watered; and surely watering at the Fountain of Arethusa we must have victory. We shall sail with the first breeze, and be assured I will return either crowned with laurels or covered with cypress."

On the next day, 23rd July, he wrote to Sir William, "The fleet is unmoored, and the moment the wind comes

off the land shall go out of this delightful harbour, where our present wants have been most amply supplied, and where every attention has been paid to us; but I have been tormented by no private orders being given to the Governor for our admission. I have only to hope that I shall still find the French fleet, and be able to get at them; the event then will be in the hands of Providence, of whose goodness none can doubt."

In spite of Nelson's positive assertion, it has been argued that this sudden change of mood was due to the arrival of private orders from the Queen, and that these were the letters to which Nelson referred in his codicil. No evidence has been produced, nor is there need of it to explain a change of mood which was perfectly natural. In the first place we know from Acton's letters that some weeks before "every proper order had been already given in Sicily"; secondly, there would scarcely have been time for further letters to arrive; thirdly, we know from Sir Edward Berry's account that there was no proper watering place, with the result that special exertions had to be made. It is therefore incredible that the arrival of further orders—even the most specific—could have enabled the fleet to water and victual in a few hours. And, as against this theory (which does not explain anything), we have Nelson's reiterated complaint that no private orders came—a stumbling-block which can only be overcome by assuming a distinction between Nelson's official and private correspondence, *i.e.*, that Nelson in his official correspondence pretended ignorance of private orders which he knew to have arrived. It is quite true that later on, and for obvious reasons, Nelson and Emma wrote fictitious letters under the name of Thomson (and a pretty hash Nelson made of them), but there is not the slightest hint that he was carrying on any mystification in 1798, nor was there the least need for it.

It is far more probable that the watering proceeded

regularly from the first, and took five days, *i.e.* from the 19th to the 23rd of July. Nelson's sudden change of mood was merely the reaction which would naturally follow on the completion of the work. His preceding irritability is very easily explained.

As already related, Nelson's entry into the Mediterranean was regarded in England as a momentous step on which the fate of Europe might depend. But this feeling was not confined to England; it was universal. It is hard for us, after the lapse of more than a century, and knowing, as we do, the outcome, to realise the acute state of suspense which agitated almost every heart. It had been growing gradually to a climax, through the constant defeat and defection of allies on the Continent, through the mystery and fear of the preparations at Toulon, through the fruitless efforts of Great Britain to secure peace, and finally through an almost despairing decision to take strong and decisive action. Everything depended on that fleet searching vainly for the French between Italy and Egypt; all eyes were turned upon it, and all ears open to every rumour that floated on the breeze.

Nelson was only too well aware of the anxious expectation gnawing at every heart, and he had an added anxiety of his own. Hitherto his reputation had rested on future promise rather than on past achievement, and he had been given his present command, at the express wish of the King, over the heads of his seniors. Three of them, Sir John Orde, Sir William Parker, and Sir Roger Curtis, resigned their commissions in a state of disgruntled envy, and their friends in England shared their indignation. Nelson was on trial; the issue of this expedition would make or mar his career, as well as decide the fate of Europe —and Nelson realised it to the full. The hounds of envy and annoyance were hot upon his track, and well-meaning but officious friends took care to let him know it. "How often have I been questioned," wrote his old friend Admiral

Goodall, "what is your favourite hero about? The French fleet has passed under his nose." St Vincent himself informed him that "Sir William Parker and Sir John Orde have written strong remonstrance against your commanding the detached squadron instead of them . . . there is a faction, fraught with all manner of ill-will to you." Indeed the storm of opposition, itself the outcome of overstrained nerves, went so far as to declare that St Vincent should be punished for appointing so young an officer, and Nelson should be impeached.

So great was the tension in Nelson's mind that after the fleet had left Syracuse he drew up a long defence of his conduct, and was only saved from putting it in by the wise persuasion of Captain Ball. "I should recommend a friend," Ball wrote, "never to begin a defence of his conduct before he is accused of error." Nelson took the hint, but the preparation of his defence is the strongest of proofs how greatly he felt the responsibility. The irritation shown in his two letters of July 22nd needs no other explanation.

Meanwhile Europe remained in almost equal suspense, and by degrees news leaked through that Bonaparte had landed at Alexandria. Doubt and hope followed each other; rumours of victory were snatched at and the tags of evidence twisted to fit in with the wishes that were father to the hope. "There are concurrent rumours," wrote Canning to Lady Stafford, "from all parts of Italy of an action having taken place between Nelson and Bonaparte, and the mail by which the enclosed intelligence comes, brings also a letter from Trieste, dated August 2nd, which states confidently that Nelson had gained a victory over Bonaparte off the Island of Candia on the 10th of July. It is probable, therefore, that the party arrived at Alexandria consists only of the advanced division of the French Fleet." That letter was written on the 21st of August, three weeks after the victory had been actually

won. Another three weeks passed and Canning wrote again, in the depths of despair, "I really had not the heart to send you the bad news on Saturday, as soon as I heard it. My own disappointment was so severe that I thought it charitable to leave anybody that had any chance of not hearing the account for a day or two in possession of their hopes. . . . There is, alas, no doubt to be entertained of the fact. Nelson *is* returned to Syracuse after 27 days' fruitless search for Bonaparte." By way of consolation he adds, "There is still no *undoubtable* account of Bonaparte's disembarkation at Alexandria. But I will not encourage you to build much hope on these circumstances."

It seems incredible in these days of wireless when events are known almost before they take place. But so it was, and the strain which was nearly intolerable when Nelson started had almost reached the snapping-point when at long last, on the 3rd of September, the *Mutine* arrived at Naples with the dispatches of victory, which were hurried through to reach London on the 2nd of October.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONQUERING HERO

(1)

One can almost hear the sigh of relief that went up from Europe when the news of the Battle of the Nile was known. Hearts everywhere burst with gratitude, and the contents flowed in a strange bewildering stream upon Nelson's wounded head. There was no town in England, no village or hamlet, where the bells were not set ringing and the night turned into day with beacons and bonfires. There was no letter written in that first week of October that was not full of "our glorious seamen." Restraint was thrown to the winds, and the determination, which for weeks had kept faces calm and tongues chattering idly of unmeaning trifles, was turned in a moment to delirious abandon. "Joy, joy, joy to you, brave, gallant, immortalised Nelson!" wrote Lady Spencer, without a blush and not more twinge of shame than compelled her to end, "I feel I have written you a strange letter, but you'll excuse it."

What England with its ingrained phlegm allowed, Naples with its southern fire far exceeded. Emma herself shall describe the scene:

Emma to Nelson.

"Naples, *September* 8, 1798.

"My dear, dear Sir, How shall I begin, what shall I say to you. 'Tis impossible I can write, for since last Monday I am delerious with joy, and assure you I have a fevour caused by agitation and pleasure. God, what a

victory! Never, never has there been anything half so glorious, so compleat. I fainted when I heard the joyfull news, and fell on my side and am hurt, but now well of that. I shou'd feil it a glory to die in such a cause. No, I would not like to die till I see and embrace the Victor of the *Nile*. How shall I describe to you the transports of Maria Carolina, 'tis not possible. She fainted and kissed her husband, her children, walked about the room, cried, kissed, and embraced every person near her, exclaiming, *Oh, brave Nelson, oh, God bless and protect our brave deliverer, oh, Nelson, Nelson, what do we not owe to you, oh, Victor, Savour of Itali, oh, that my swolen heart cou'd now tell him personally what we owe to him!*

"You may judge, my dear Sir, of the rest, but my head will not permit me to tell you half of the rejoicing. The Neapolitans are mad with joy, and if you wos here now, you wou'd be killed with kindness. Sonets on sonets, illuminations, rejoicings; not a French dog dare shew his face. How I glory in the honner of my Country and my *Countryman*! I walk and tread in air with pride, feiling I was born in the same land with the victor Nelson and his gallant band. But no more, I cannot, dare not, trust myself, for I am not well. Little dear Captain Hoste will tell you the rest. He dines with us in the day, for he will not sleep out of his ship, and we Love him dearly. He is a fine, good lad. Sir William is delighted with him, and I say he will be a second Nelson. If he is onely half a Nelson, he will be superior to all others.

"I send you two letters from my adorable queen. One was written to me the day we received the glorious news, the other yesterday. Keep them, as they are in her own handwriting. I have kept copies only, but I feil that you ought to have them. If you had seen our meeting after the battle, but I will keep it all for your arrival. I coo'd not do justice to her feiling nor to my own, with writing it; and we are preparing your appartment against

you come. I hope it will not be long, for Sir William and I are so impatient to embrace you. I wish you cou'd have seen our house the 3 nights of illumination. 'tis, 'twas covered with your glorious name. Their were 3 thousand Lamps, and their shou'd have been 3 millions if we had had time. All the English vie with each other in celebrating this most gallant and ever memorable victory. Sir William is ten years younger since the happy news, and he now glories in you when your name is mentioned. He cannot contain his joy. For God's sake come to Naples soon. We receive so many Sonets and Letters of congratulation. I send you some of them to shew you how your success is felt here. How I felt for poor Troubridge. He must have been so angry on the sand-bank, so brave an officer! In short, I pity those who were not in the battle. I wou'd have been rather an English powder-monkey, or a swab in that great victory, than an Emperor out of it, but you will be so tired of all this. Write or come soon to Naples, and rejoin your ever sincere and oblidged friend,

"Emma Hamilton."

"The Queen has this moment sent a Dymond Ring to Captain Hoste, six buts of wine, 2 casks, for the officers, and every man on board a guinea each. Her letter is in English and comes as from an unknown person, but a well-wisher to our country, and an admirer of our gallant Nelson. As war is not yet declared with France, she cou'd not shew herself so openly as she wished, but she as done so much, and rejoiced so very publickly, that all the world sees it. She bids me to say that she longs more to see you than any woman with child can long for anything she may take a fancy to, and she shall be for ever unhappy if you do not come. God bless you my dear, dear friend.

"My dress from head to foot is alla Nelson. Ask Hoste. Even my shawl is in Blue with gold anchors all over. My

earrings are Nelson's anchors ; in short, we are be-Nelsoned all over. I send you some Sonets but I must have taken a ship on purpose to send you all written on you. Once more, God bless you. My mother desires her love to you. I am so sorry to write in such a hurry. I am affraid you will not be able to read this scrawl."

Nelson alone was not wholly pleased. Two French ships had escaped ; his victory was incomplete. Moreover, he was badly shaken with a wound in the forehead. He returned thanks humbly to God, and expressed in moving yet simple terms his gratitude to the men under his command. Then he reviewed the situation, and finally decided to stay as long as possible off the Nile so as to ensure the destruction of the French in Egypt. While so engaged, he received orders from St Vincent to return and co-operate in an expedition against Minorca.

The voyage to Naples, with his crippled ships, occupied nearly five weeks, and during this period of enforced leisure Nelson's spirits rose and fell with his health. As he drew nearer Naples, a curious repugnance to the place came over him. "I detest this voyage to Naples," he wrote to St Vincent. "Nothing but absolute necessity could force me to the measure. Syracuse in future, while my operations lie on the eastern side of Sicily, is my port, where every refreshment may be had for a fleet." Yet to Naples he had to come, and on his arrival meet the full blast of adulation.

The volume of praise grew as each successive part of the English fleet appeared. When Captain Hoste arrived on the *Mutine* the joy had been the delirious outburst of pent-up feeling, too wild and exuberant to last. Miss Cornelia Knight records the effect on her next-door neighbour, General di Pietra, and it is an epitome of the whole city : "Never shall I forget the shouts, the bursts of applause, the toasts drank, the glasses broken one after another by the secretary in token of exultation, till the General,

laughing heartily, stopped him by saying that he should not have a glass to drink Nelson's health in on his arrival."

The climax was reached on the 22nd of September, when the *Vanguard* with Nelson on board limped into the harbour. A flotilla of boats came out to meet him, bringing the King, Emma and her husband, and half the population. As Nelson wrote to his wife, "Alongside came my honoured friends; the scene in the boat was terribly affecting. Up flew her Ladyship, and exclaiming, 'O, God, is it possible?' she fell into my arm more dead than alive. Tears, however, soon set matters to rights; when alongside came the King. The scene was in its way as interesting. He took me by the hand, calling me his 'Deliverer and Preserver,' with every other expression of kindness. In short, all Naples calls me 'Nostro Liberatore.' My greeting from the lower classes was truly affecting. I hope some day to have the pleasure of introducing you to Lady Hamilton; she is one of the very best women in this world, she is an honour to her sex. Her kindness, with Sir William's, to me is more than I can express. I am in their house, and I may now tell you it required all the kindness of my friends to set me up. Lady Hamilton intends writing to you."

(2)

Henceforward Emma's story is mixed up with Nelson's, and a few prefatory remarks may not be out of place.

Emma had risen to giddy heights by a combination of chance, luck and talents. She had won a considerable position, but not fame. Had she died at this moment, she would have been remembered because of Romney's pictures, but the details of her life would have disappeared. She owes her fame to Nelson, and because of that, her fame has tended to become either notoriety or nonsense. To attempt to clothe her in Nelson's glory is absurd. To

say that she did nothing but smirch an honourable name is to take far too narrow a view of facts and none whatever of fancies.

If Emma injured Nelson, he also injured her, and neither acted with deliberation. Chance threw them together; human passions did the rest. Which of the two had most reason to resist? Emma had lived from youth in scenes of dissipation and vice, and what virtue she carried through was entirely her own. As little more than a child she had been debauched; then she came under Greville—a shallow, miserly intriguer who possessed hardly anything but "the manners of a dancing master and the morals of a whore." She learned to love this hypocritical patch very simply and very truly, only to be sold to an old man for a testamentary promise. She fought this new humiliation as few girls would have fought, with every circumstance against her. Stranded in a foreign country, with no means to return and no friends at hand, dependent on the bounty of her would-be lover, in the midst of a corrupt capital, she stood out against Sir William for eight months. When she had finally given way, she was enfolded in the glare and glitter of a debased court, where what right feeling she still retained was likely enough to be blunted. Chastity and conjugal fidelity were not the virtues of the age; at Naples they were mere objects of fun. Every example, every inducement, including the generous incentives of patriotism and hero-worship, swept her on to her ruin.

Nelson's life had been very different. He was the son of a parson, and had been brought up on strict religious lines. True, he passed from the shelter of his home to the hard and by no means moral life of the navy at a very tender age, but the religious bent was ingrained, and to his dying day he preserved the remembrance of the principles inculcated in youth. As all sailors, he was no doubt sentimental, but that absolves his heart at most, not his

head. He knew the moral tone of Naples; he described it himself as full of fiddlers and whores. He was at the zenith of his power and fame. He was a guest beneath Sir William's roof, where all the laws of chivalry and hospitality demanded that he should curb his passions. Yet he succumbed. And the effect he had on Emma was wholly bad. It was he who, to use her own sadly prophetic words, vanquished her sense of virtue. Thereafter she lost the transparency of her character; her measure of good decayed, her measure of evil flourished. She had no genius to save her, no duty to distract—only a doddering old husband, whose blindness was almost more contemptible, if it was real, than degrading, if it was feigned. Let us at least be honest and divide the blame impartially. "The woman tempted me and I did eat" was never a valid excuse, and in this case hardly true. The passion was Nelson's more than Emma's; the bitter results hers more than his. At least he died gloriously and bequeathed an earldom to his brother, while she died in shame and bequeathed nothing but her body to the grave. And in the lifetime of both she gained only the backwash of his glory, while she supplied him with a fierce joy and happiness, both in herself and in their child, that come to few men and should be despised by none. Even in that the balance of gain lay with him; he could drown the scandal in the shouts of victory; but when he was dead she had lost all, even that physical beauty which might have dazzled censorious eyes. She suffered greatly, and if she sinned, she was greatly sinned against, and because this fact is generally overlooked, it may be well, before coming to the details of their joint fortunes, to give some general proof of the statement that Nelson injured Emma.

Up to the point of their meeting on the *Vanguard's* deck no first-hand account of Emma had contained any real censure. All the scandals of her youth, all the diatribes on her lack of manners and want of morals date

from after 1798. The only exceptions are the remarks, already quoted, in Lady Webster's journal, and a letter written to Greville by a certain Heneage Legge in March 1791. Legge, as a friend, thought it incumbent on him to warn Greville that Sir William seemed likely to marry Emma. Regarding the match as most unsuitable, he searched high and low for impediments, and could find nothing but Emma's defective ear and the fact that " she wants a little refinement of manners "—the two blemishes which afterwards affronted Lady Webster, and which may be taken as proved. Apart from these two cases, there is nothing but praise, sometimes rather reluctant, but praise all the same. Emma forced admiration when she did not spontaneously win enthusiasm. How enthusiastic wholly impartial observers could be will appear in the following letter written by a traveller, J. B. S. Morritt, in December 1795.

" Dear Anne, I have just burnt a letter I had begun to you. . . . I had given you a long account of a lady you have heard described once by Mrs Parsons, and had, as I thought, made it very exact. In the meantime we saw her again, and when I come to read it over, it will not do at all, and I find it is not on the first visit one can do justice to so charming a subject. . . . If I were to say we did not admire her, the only excuse I could add must be that we were blind, for it can't happen to anybody that is not so. You may suppose her really an extraordinary woman, without education, without friends, without manners, when she came here ; she has added to all the outward accomplishments of a woman of education a knowledge of Italian, French and music, which last, with a very fine voice, she executes divinely. Add to these the most difficult of all, the *ton* of society, which she has raised herself to, and though not the *most* elegant, she is certainly on a par with most women of the circle she is

in. This would be alone a proof of very superior sense, but her conduct to her husband is a stronger one. As he does nothing but admire her, and make other people admire her, from morning till night, as he would a fine painting, it is a delicate point, and yet she manages it so well that without affectation and without prudery (which would only make people recollect how times are altered) she keeps him and everybody else in order, and behaves in the most exceptional manner. In her attitudes she exceeds herself, and joins every grace that ever was united to the greatest beauty of face and person. . . . Such is Lady Hamilton, and as we knew her story you may conceive we did not expect so much. . . . I can only tell you how she struck me, and I never was more surprised in my life. . . . She mimics in a moment everything that strikes her, with a versatility you have not a notion of. After this you may suppose her entertaining to a degree; I am told she is capricious, but we have not experienced it, *et d'ailleurs tout est permis à une jolie femme.*"

So much for the past. From the moment she met the victor of the Nile, the whole atmosphere changes. It becomes increasingly difficult to find any first-hand praise, and the volume of censure grows steadily until it includes all the scandals that have sprung up around her name. There is one qualification: everyone continues to speak highly, if not rapturously, of her Attitudes. The fact is striking. If the censure had been due to envy, if it had been undeserved, somebody would have praised her other qualities, somebody would have denied her artistic talent. We are therefore driven to the conclusion that this difference of feeling before and after September 1798 represents some tangible change in herself.

It is significant that what is true of Emma is largely true of Nelson. Up to this meeting he had won general, though not universal praise; his reputation had been ever

on the increase, and his capacity for winning affection and popularity was remarkable. But from this moment the situation altered. He still remained lovable, and still kept the art of stirring the imagination of the crowd; but individuals began to feel and say hard things about him. His victory was too recent and his dues too obvious for the censure to be loud or open, but hints of dissatisfaction spread till, with the lapse of time, they grew into something stronger, and the vague impression became a positive disapproval.

This change of feeling needs an explanation. It was no mere envy of the great and highly endowed; it was no mere revolt against the abuse of power. On the contrary, it was an outburst of disappointment at the failure of both to live up to their reputations, and a protest at the waste of consummate abilities. In a word, the effect of each upon the other was wholly for the bad. Their mutual blame must be emphasised, because the tendency to lay the fault at Emma's door is more than unjust.

In his Life of Nelson Captain Mahan gives an expressive picture of Nelson's deterioration, and in taking the liberty to quote it, I would only add this—that practically without the alteration of a word, it is equally true of Emma:

"Much that made Nelson so lovable remained to the end; but into his heart, as betrayed by his correspondence, and into his life, from the occasional glimpses afforded by letters and journals of associates, there thenceforth entered much that is unlovely, and which to no appreciable extent was seen before. The simple bonhomie, the absence of conventional reticence, the superficial lack of polish noted by his early biographers, and which he had had no opportunity to acquire, the child-like vanity that transpires so innocently in his confidential home letters, and was only the weak side of his noble longing for heroic action, degenerated rapidly into loss of dignity of life, into an unseemly

susceptibility to extravagant adulation, as he succumbed to surroundings, the corruptness of which none at first realised more clearly, and where one woman was the sole detaining fascination. And withal, as the poison worked, discontent with self bred discontent with others, and with his own conditions. Petulance and querulousness too often supplanted the mental elasticity which had counted for naught the roughnesses on the road to fame. The mind not worthily occupied, and therefore ill at ease, became embittered, prone to censure and to resent, suspicious at times and harsh in judgment, gradually tending towards alienation, not from his wife only, but from his best and earliest friends."

CHAPTER XVI

A FARCICAL EPISODE

(I)

Nelson had been sadly knocked about these last few years. His eye had gone; his arm had gone; he had few teeth left, and at the Nile he had received a rattling blow on the head, which at the time he believed to be mortal, and found afterwards to be very painful. These physical shocks, combined with the mental strain of recent days, left him very much in need of comfort and nursing. When he reached Naples Emma gave him both in abundance. In times of sickness she was the essential woman, untiring, devoted, cheerful.

It was kindly meant; it was well done; and it proved Emma's undoing. Convalescence is always a susceptible time, and Nelson lost not a moment in realising her charms. Within a few days he was writing of her enthusiastically —to his wife, to his commander-in-chief, to everybody. Another day or two and he was half aware of the danger he was running. "I am writing," he told the grim old St Vincent, "opposite Lady Hamilton, therefore you will not be surprised at the glorious jumble of this letter. Were your Lordship in my place, I much doubt if you could write so well; our hearts and hands must be all in a flutter. Naples is a dangerous place, and we must keep clear of it." In another few days he had forgotten the danger in the sudden knowledge that "Lady Hamilton is an Angel." The passion which consumed him like a fire was spreading apace.

Meanwhile, what of Emma? She was entertaining a

man, the like of whom she had never met before—not a mere lion of society, not a mere prince of the blood royal, but one before whom kings and queens bowed down as their deliverer and protector; one on whom costly gifts and honours were showering from all quarters of the globe; one whose name was being shouted in accents of exultation throughout the world. She was sitting at the feet of a hero who spoke of wars and rumours of wars, whose eager mind revelled in great risks nobly run, whose restless spirit was even now fretting at the timid delays of the Court of Naples—hitherto the height of her admiration. How decisive compared with her easy-going husband! How infinitely bolder than the cautious Greville! Emma was physically brave, and her heart stirred within her. Emma was greedy of fame, and her ambition sprang to life. She absorbed Nelson's words and gestures with all her talent for imitation keyed to its best, just as she clothed herself flamboyantly in his colours, his name blazoned on her scarf, his anchor on her buttons. She was entering into a glorious world, unsuspected hitherto. In her letters to him at this period she uses repeatedly the quaint expression "dear respectable admiral." Inadequate as it seems, it goes to the heart of her feelings; she was overflowing with respect for him. She had adopted him as her ideal hero, and he responded in every particular.

(2)

Nelson spent the first few days quietly, being "set up," as he told his wife. But his mind was actively employed on the best means of turning his victory to account. His idea, as Berry wrote, was "first to secure the Victory, and then to make the most of it, according to future circumstances," and that applied not only to the actual fight but to subsequent events. In this pause of convalescence his mind went back to Spencer's thought, if

not his words, " It is impossible not to perceive how much depends on the exertions of the great Continental powers." Naples was not a great power, but it was in negotiation with England and Austria ; there were signs of reviving spirit, and a slight push might send the hesitating powers into open war. Naples might provide the spark.

He expected Naples to rise of its own accord. At all events, by the 27th of September—five days after his arrival—he was complaining to St Vincent, " What precious moments the Courts of Naples and Vienna are losing ; three months would liberate Italy, but this Court is so enervated that the happy moment will be lost." There was plenty of talk ; the possibility of war was in everybody's thoughts and on everybody's lips. But nothing happened, and to Nelson's impatient mind every hour seemed of importance. He could not understand the delay, and grew irritable and annoyed at the fêtes and feasts which led to nothing. On the 29th of September, his birthday, Emma gave a magnificent party, at which Nelson was the lion, and the next day his impatience found vent in another letter to St Vincent. " I trust, my Lord, in a week we shall all be at sea. I am very unwell, and the miserable conduct of this Court is not likely to cool my irritable temper. It is a country of fiddlers and poets, whores and scoundrels."

Before sailing he determined to try again, and, in conjunction with the Hamiltons, set out his views in documentary form. As he wrote to St Vincent, " This country, by its system of procrastination will ruin itself ; the Queen sees and thinks as we do. The Ministry, except Acton, are for putting off the evil day, when it will come with destruction. War at this moment can alone save these kingdoms. I am decidedly in opposition to Gallo. General Mack is hourly expected here from Vienna to command the Neapolitan Army. Acton says they are ready to march. I have scolded, anger is neces-

sary; you will not believe I have said or done anything without the approbation of Sir William Hamilton. His Excellency is too good to them, and the strong language of an English Admiral telling them plain truths of their miserable system, may do good."

This apparently unsolicited and certainly irregular proceeding on the part of an English Admiral was not without effect. Writing on the 13th of October to St Vincent, he says that Mack had arrived and that "the Emperor has desired the King of Naples to begin and he will support him. Mack says he shall march in ten days; their Majesties have given him their confidence, and I feel I am in full possession of it. This evening I shall have in writing the result of last night's session as the Queen calls it, not a Council, for in that case Gallo must have been on it; but he is tottering, and the Queen has promised he shall not be the war minister. Acton was going down, but we have set him up again. Lady Hamilton is an angel, she has honoured me by being my ambassadress to the Queen; therefore she has my implicit confidence, and is worthy of it. You, my dear Lord and Friend, make great allowances for my defects; my intentions are good, I vouch for no more."

But although Nelson's exertions, aided and abetted by Emma, were fruitful in inducing Naples to renew the war, they had a repercussion which was not without tremendous import. The King and Queen were acting on Nelson's advice, against the opinion of their Foreign Minister. They therefore claimed, and had a right to claim, Nelson's special assistance. He sailed for Malta on the 15th of October, but before leaving he promised the King that he would return in the first week of November and help the military operations. "In thus acquiescing in the desire of the King of Naples," he admitted, "I give up my plan, which was to have gone to Egypt, and attended to the destruction of the French shipping in that quarter;

but I hope before Captain Hood quits his situation [before Alexandria] both the Turkish and Russian squadrons will be on that coast."

In giving this promise Nelson was not running counter either to the spirit or letter of his orders. The whole Mediterranean was under his control, and operations were proceeding throughout its length. Nelson could not be in all places at once, and had to choose. Undoubtedly he felt his proper place was off the Nile, but any decision must be subject to revision in the light of events. Off Egypt he might ensure the destruction of the French army. That was important—more important than he realised, since Bonaparte's genius was not yet fully understood—but if his presence at Naples led to a renewal of war by the European powers, that might well be even more important. There was much to be said either way, and if Emma's eyes were the deciding factor, too much stress must not be laid on the fact. Hitherto Nelson had acted on his own initiative, without more than cordial co-operation on the part of Emma and her husband. To him belongs whatever blame or credit attaches to the decision of the Neapolitan Court and the alterations in his own plans. His doubts and difficulties were summed up by himself very briefly in a letter to St Vincent: "I do not like going back from the eastward, but I give up my own opinion for this time, as it is impossible to foresee how the new war may turn out."

While off Malta he began to grow more doubtful. All that he saw of Neapolitan management disgusted him. "When I come to Naples," he told Sir William, "I can have nothing pleasant to say of the conduct of his Sicilian Majesty's ministers towards the inhabitants of Malta." His description of what he found is graphic in its indignation. "Who have the Government of Naples sent to lead or encourage these people? A very good, and I daresay brave old man; enervated and shaking with the

palsy. This is the sort of man that they have sent; without any supply, without even a promise of protection, and without his bringing any answer to the repeated respectful memorials of these people to their Sovereign."

However, he made arrangements for the blockade, and after receiving the capitulation of the neighbouring island of Gozo, set sail on the 30th of October for Naples. He did not, however, imagine that his stay there would be long, for he told Spencer Smith, the Consul at Constantinople, that he hoped soon to make his appearance off Zante and Corfu.

Alas for human wishes! Nelson arrived at Naples on the 5th of November, had an audience with the King, and on the 7th admitted to St Vincent, that "I am, I fear, drawn into a promise that Naples bay shall never be left without an English man of war." Nelson attempted to excuse himself for this further promise, and, as usually happens, merely betrayed his own weakness; "I never intended leaving the coast of Naples without one, but if I had, who could withstand the request of such a Queen?"

Nelson's enthusiasm for the Queen was evidently second-hand, a new version of the old adage "Love me, love my dog." Two days later Emma herself shone through the flimsy covering, when St Vincent was informed that "Lady Hamilton has written so fully, and I will answer so ably, on all subjects, that but little remains for me to say. Your commands respecting the Queen were executed with so much propriety, that if I had never before had cause for admiration it must then have commenced; her Ladyship's and Sir William's inexpressible goodness to me is not to be told by words, and it ought to stimulate me to the noblest actions, and I feel it will." He adds in a phrase reminiscent of St Paul, which the future was to make doubly ironical, "My mind I know is right, but, alas, my body is weak."

(3)

Meanwhile at Naples all was agitation and a reluctant slipping along the predestined groove. Nelson at least had this excuse, that he was the soul and spirit of the forward movement; no sooner was his back turned than vacillation revived. His one whole-hearted convert was Emma, who reported "Here we go on with vigour, and I flatter myself *we spur* them, for I am allways with the Queen, and I hold out your energick language to her." Emma was telling the bare truth; the language was Nelson's and the vigour was hers; to the Neapolitans belonged nothing but muddle. She was following her self-chosen leader with an imitation that must have been admirable. Her latest "attitude" was Nelson himself, a speaking likeness in the literal sense of the word. "I flatter myself," she wrote to him, "I did much. For whilst the passions of the Queen [were] up and agitated, I got up, put out my left arm like you, spoke the language of truth to her, painted the drooping situation of this fine country, her friends sacrificed, her husband, children and herself led to the Block; and eternal dishonour to her memory, after for once having been active, doing her duty in fighting bravely to the last, to save her Country, her Religion, from the hands of the rapacious murderers of her sister, and the Royal Family in France, but she was sure of being lost, if they were inactive, and there was a chance of being saved, if they made use now of the day, and struck now while all minds are imprest with the Horrers their neighbours are suffering from these Robbers." It was excellently done, and no doubt had the effect of confirming the Queen, though the Queen was perhaps the least in need of confirmation of all the authorities in Naples.

Nelson returned to find the army, with the King and

General Mack, in camp. Nominally the army was 50,000 strong, but in fact Acton had made a forced levy in the provinces, thus adding to the standing army of 15,000 men what Comte Roger de Damas, one of the generals, called "a great deal of confusion and embarrassment."

These "peasants in uniform" were good material, but, added to their own lack of experience, they were devoid of proper leaders and proper stores. Everything was weighted against them. The commander-in-chief, Mack, had a big reputation but no ability, and the other generals were for the most part too inefficient even to carry out manœuvres. No foresight was shown, no supervision was exercised. The mules for the artillery were neither strong enough, nor sufficiently numerous; the guns were unequal to a week's campaign, and incapable of travelling on bad roads.

However, the army set out on the 22nd November for the Roman States. The winter rains had already begun and most of the baggage wagons could not be dragged out of camp. A few miles march brought the army to the river Melfa, which they had to cross. "One would have thought," commented Damas, "considering we had been at San Germano for about a month, that this necessity would have been foreseen and a bridge thrown across the river." Nothing of the sort had been done, and the soldiers had to wade breast-high through a swollen torrent. Not a single wagon could be pulled over, and as Damas records, "although we bivouacked for the night on the other side of the river, the army never set eyes again on the few wagons that had contrived to leave the camp, and not a single officer was able to change his clothes till the campaign was ended."

Rome was reached after almost incredible hardships, and was entered, simply because the French had retreated. The condition of the army was deplorable; "arms were rusted by the constant rain; shoes were lost; the artillery

was scattered over the roads, many of the mules being dead or disabled; the baggage wagons were five days' march in the rear." Instead of allowing the troops a breathing space, Mack hurried on. His intention was to attack the French in the course of the second day's march in the position they had taken up at Civita Castellana, and, acting by text books instead of by common sense, he divided his troops into three portions, which were to advance by different routes. The plan itself was admirable if the troops had been trained and fit, and if the generals had possessed a modicum of experience. As events turned out, the two flanks were defeated in detail, and the centre had to retire. Even so, the situation would have been by no means desperate, had not Mack lost his head and actually asked the French general, Championnet, to be allowed to return to Germany.

In less than a month Naples was in danger and the Royal Family in flight. The war against France had turned into a fiasco.

(4)

This episode, farcical and unimportant, being the first obvious event after the meeting of Nelson and Emma, has been seized upon by Nelson's biographers as the beginning of Emma's sins. Certainly the Neapolitan disaster sprang out of Nelson's advice to the King. It is easy to be wise after the event, and Captain Mahan has set out the cogent reasons which should have made Nelson pause before giving that advice. "Under ordinary conditions," he adds, "Nelson might have seen this, but he was well handled." The inference is that he was jockeyed into giving his opinion, and of course Emma was to blame.

Nothing could be more unjust. Long before Emma appeared on the scene, before even the battle of the Nile,

Nelson had written his views on paper. He had been urging Naples for months to come into the open. What he had urged in May and June before the battle of the Nile, he continued to urge now that he had the added argument of the French defeat. There was nothing new in this, nothing that can possibly be laid at Emma's door. The only count against her is that she accepted his views blindly and did her best to forward them. Nor were his views so fatuous as the course of events made them appear. His mistake lay, not in the advice he gave (though the manner may have been irregular), but in his failure to realise the diplomatic and military situation. As to that, he was, after all, a seaman and a foreigner ; he could not be expected to know beforehand the quality of the Neapolitan army, or the state of affairs in Europe.

If he inquired, as we may suppose he did, he would have learnt that Naples had 50,000 men, whom Mack, a general of repute, regarded as among the finest troops in Europe ; he would have learnt that the French in Italy were not strong, and that Austria was thinking of renewing the war. There was a reasonable prospect of success, and success might lead to striking developments. Even Damas, much as he disliked Nelson, Acton and Mack, could find nothing worse to say than that " to make the attack was the only prudent course, and it was more the manner of it, and the time chosen, that were in fault, than the actual enterprise itself. Two months later the attempt would have been perfectly justified and likely to succeed," *i.e.* when Austria had actually declared war.

But if this original sin, on which so much stress has been laid, was more an error of judgment on Nelson's part than any villainy on Emma's, it still remains a fact that for the next two years much in Nelson's life demands an explanation. His biographers attempt the rather illogical task of slurring over his faults so far as he was concerned, and giving them full weight when apportioning

blame to Emma. Speaking of the two, Captain Mahan says "that such intimacy and such relations resulted in no influence upon the admiral's public action is not to be believed. That he consciously perverted his views is improbable, but that he saw duty under other than normal lights is not only probable, but evident." Emma has her own sins to bear, but a sense of proportion must be kept. It is of course ridiculous to suppose that Nelson deliberately set out to do what he thought wrong, but it will become increasingly evident that he allowed his better judgment to be overcome by personal feelings, doing, in fact, what Hotham had done before him. As time went on he saw more and more clearly that he had no right to dally at Naples and Palermo, and just because he knew it, was for ever making excuses to his own conscience and to his superiors. The results of his dalliance were wholly mortifying. Instead of blockading Malta, he found himself acting as a mere captain of transport; instead of capturing the *Guillaume Tell*, he was absent when it was captured; instead of reducing the French army in Egypt, he was superseded in the task by a junior officer; instead of acting against the islands, he had to endure the successes of the Russians, and found them so galling that he condemned himself in accusing them. In a word, instead of adding to his renown, he bartered away much of it for the pleasure of lounging beside Emma, and but for his victory and his amazing luck he might have bartered it all. His whole genius was under a cloud, and his fervent spirit was consumed in finding reasons for doing nothing. There is not the least doubt, if the truth is to be told, that his actions during the next two years were indefensible. That this was due to his feelings for Emma is obvious enough, but it is sheer injustice to lay the whole blame on her or to whittle away Nelson's responsibility. Apart from the influence of her face, which she could hardly help, how far must she really share in the opprobrium?

If we are to regard Emma as a "stateswoman," then her share of the blame is large, for she must have known that Naples and Sicily were insignificant trifles, and that Nelson was needed elsewhere. But she was in no sense a stateswoman, and her views were limited to what she borrowed from others. To the Queen Naples was much, if not everything, and the Queen's views coloured Emma's, or rather were adopted by Emma without discrimination. That being so, no doubt she fully believed the safety of Naples to be a matter of importance, and that in urging Nelson to aid this musical comedy kingdom she was doing important work. It was Nelson's business to disabuse her, instead of which he lent a willing ear. Emma, in fact, was living up to her lights; Nelson was not. That Emma got above herself is true enough, but that is a comparatively venial fault. Nelson's error was to fall below himself for purely personal reasons, which is far more blameworthy.

CHAPTER XVII

A MIDNIGHT FLITTING

At the same time that the army started for Rome, Nelson took 5000 Neapolitan troops by sea to Leghorn. It was the beginning of his humiliations. From the victor of the Nile he had sunk to a mere captain of transport, and the change was rubbed in by the General in command. Though the episode has escaped notice, Nelson recorded: "I am certain that I was never more hurt in my life, being clearly considered by the General as a nothing, as a Master of a Transport. My feelings almost got the better of my prudence; however, I considered this a sacrifice necessary for the King of Naples."

Hurrying back to Naples, he found affairs at a crisis, and directly news of Mack's defeat arrived, began preparations for the flight of the Royal Family. The position was not easy. By this time his hopes of the Neapolitan army had sunk to zero; he did not believe that anything could stop the triumphant advance of the French on Naples. But the populace thought otherwise. They swore to defend the city and the Royal Family, giving violent and noisy proofs of their devotion. Somehow rumours of the intended flight spread abroad, and the people became more clamorous. Their King must stay in their midst, and they paraded before the palace, demanding ocular proof of his presence.

Their genuine enthusiasm meant nothing to Nelson. It meant much to the Queen, but that much was terrifying. She had by this time learnt how unpopular she was, and judging everything by France, saw nothing in all this but

the spirit which stopped Louis XVI. at Varennes and subsequently beheaded him. The Royal Family was torn between the desire to escape and the fear of being discovered, while Nelson himself could do little to help them make up their minds. As he said, "it would have been highly imprudent in either Sir William Hamilton or myself, to have gone to Court, as we knew that all our movements were watched, and even an idea was entertained by the Jacobins of arresting our persons as hostages, as they foolishly imagined, against the attack of Naples should the French get possession of it."

It was at this juncture that Emma proved invaluable. No more convenient channel could have been found for making arrangements secretly and safely. "The whole correspondence," Nelson told St Vincent, "relative to this important business was carried on with the greatest address by Lady Hamilton and the Queen; who having been in constant habits of correspondence, no one could suspect them." It was work in which Emma would appear at her best. She was always physically brave, and opposition had a trick of making her more determined. What she lacked was diplomacy and *finesse*, qualities which were unnecessary. Her part was simply that of the soldier under orders, and she played it to perfection.

When the correspondence finished, when the hysterical Queen and cowardly King had decided to take the plunge, it was largely on her that the preparations fell. Though they valued their lives highly, the King and Queen valued wealth almost as much. They could not endure to leave behind anything that was worth the taking. Hence, while Mack was running races with the French, and Nelson was chafing with impatience, the Queen and Emma were stowing jewels and bullion into casks, labelled as stores for the British fleet. One is reminded of broad farce. The royal palace and the ambassador's house were being dismantled, packages and bales were being carried to and fro,

and yet the populace which came clamouring about the doors at each new rumour of flight, was calmed by a short appearance on the balcony and a few bows and smiles. Naples may have been suspicious of the bully beef going to the fleet, but it accepted Emma's labels.

The danger was of course more fancied than real. Had the flight been discovered, the *lazzaroni* had no power to resist Nelson's sailors. Yet it was naturally better that there should be no riot, and the effort at concealment lent a spice of adventure. So the secret preparations continued, and Emma sat up "for twelve nights without once closing my eyes," and all the while thrilling with the "fear of being torn to pieces by the tumultous mob."

The last scene of the comedy took place on the night of the 21st of December. It was a gala night, with a great reception given by Kelim Effendi for the purpose of presenting Nelson with the Sultan's plume of honour. Emma and her husband had been invited, and with melodramatic *finesse* ordered supper to be prepared at home and dismissed their servants. Then after a decent interval, all left the reception, and while Emma and her husband went direct to the boat, Nelson repaired to the Palace, where he conducted the Royal Family, ten in number, down what Emma subsequently referred to as a "subterranean passage." It may have been subterranean—such passages have recently been discovered—but there was nothing romantic about the proceedings except the darkness and the fact of flight. To the Queen it seemed terrible enough, especially as she had been occupying herself throughout the day—and several days before—with writing nonsensical letters about ruin and dishonour and renouncing the world, preparing to die and making ready for eternity. In such a state of hysteria the dark was enough to frighten her, especially as she was "without our ladies-in-waiting or other attendants."

Emma, though far less stupid, was almost equally excited.

She was living in a romance that stirred her graphic imagination, so that, although not present herself, she saw Nelson clearly in her mind's eye mounting "the dark staircase that goes into the Queen's room and with a dark lantern, cutlasses, pistol, etc."—all presumably dangling from his one arm—bringing off every soul. To do her justice, however, it is possible that she was present, though the only bit of evidence is her own petition to the Prince Regent written fourteen years later and apparently at variance with her letter to Greville a fortnight after the event. But whether she was present or absent makes no difference to her services. She had been uncommonly useful both in presenting Nelson's views and in aiding the preparations. In the midst of the anxious terrified court, she had been a rallying point, strong in Nelson's conviction and constant in urging it. The court changed its mind every five minutes, and if the safety of the Royal Family was a matter of importance, and if (as Nelson thought) it could only be secured by flight, Emma must be given a considerable degree of merit as a very active agent on whom a large part of the details fell.

But whatever her merit as a go-between, the real praise due to her begins after the embarkation, when she was no longer a "stateswoman," nor engaged on work that was more fitting for men. Once on board the *Vanguard*, once free from the "tumultuous mob," once more able to act as a woman in a sphere more definitely feminine, the finer points of Emma's character were able to show themselves, and had the fullest scope.

The *Vanguard* did not sail till the evening of the 23rd of December, and ran into the worst storm that Nelson had ever experienced. The King and Queen were prostrate, and what was worse unused to hardships; such attendants as they had were far too sea-sick to be courtiers. Sir William, fully persuaded that the ship must sink, and unable to endure the thought of drowning, sat pistol in

hand waiting to blow out his brains at the last moment. Nelson, of course, was busy.

It therefore fell to Emma's lot to look after this wretched crowd of incapables. Success never spoilt the essential kindness of her heart, and in times of distress no false pride stopped her from taking up again the *rôle* of housemaid and nurse. Now in the stuffy crowded cabins where all was misery and incompetence, she made up beds with her own linen and waited on everyone hand and foot, finding time the while to look after the royal children. On Christmas day the youngest prince was taken ill, and Emma nursed him tenderly, only to have him die in her arms that same evening. It is worth dwelling for a moment on this picture of a wonderfully beautiful woman, accustomed to luxury and petting, putting aside all thoughts of herself, and amidst a crowd of praying women and frightened old men, amidst the howling of the storm and the imminent risk of shipwreck, passing from one to the other, attending to their needs and quieting their fears, and finally, worn out herself, nursing the poor little prince in his convulsions. No woman could have done more, and many would have done far less.

She was still unspoilt in essentials. Her letter to Greville giving an account of the journey contains no boasting and no unpardonable exaggerations, though it does contain much in praise of others who deserved less than she gave.

Emma to Greville.

"PALERMO.

"*Jan.* 7. 1799.

"I have onely time to write you one line as Sir William is not sure he can have a moment to spare today to let you know of our arrival here. We cannot enter in to detail of our being oblidged to quit dear Naples. If you are aquainted with Lords Grenville or Spencer you will know the particulars from them, know onely the Vanguard Lord

Nelson brought ous off with all the Royal familly and we arrived here on Christmas day at night after having been near lost, a tempest that Lord Nelson had never seen for thirty years he has been at sea the like ; all our sails torn to pieces & all the men ready with their axes to cut away the masts & poor I to attend & keep up the spirits of the Queen, the Princess Royall, 3 young princesses a baby six weeks old & 2 young princes Leopold & Albert, the last, 6 years old, my favourite, taken with convulsions in the midst of the storm & at 7 in the evening of Christmas day expired in my arms, not a soul to help me, as the few women her Majesty brought on board were incapable of helping her or the poor Royal children. The King & prince were below in the ward room with Castelcicala, Belmonte, Grovina, Acton & Sir William, my mother their assisting them, all their attendants being so frighten'd & on their knees praying. The King says my mother is an angel. I have been for twelve nights without once closing my eyes, for 6 nights before the embarkation I sat up at my own house receving all the jewells, money & effects of the Royall family & from thence conveying them on board the Vanguard, living in fear of being torn to peices by the tumultous mob who suspected our departure, but Sir Wm. & I being beloved in the Country saved ous. On the 21st. at ten at night, Lord Nelson, Sir Wm. mother & self went out to pay a visit, sent all our servants a way & ordered them in 2 hours to come with the coach & order'd supper at home. When they were gone, we set off, walked to our boat & after 2 hours got to the Vanguard. Lord N. then went with armed boats to the secret pallace, got up the dark staircase that goes in to the Queens room & with a dark lantern, cutlasses, pistol &c. &c. brought off every soul, ten in number to the Vanguard at twelve a clock. If we had remained to the next day we shoud have all been imprisoned; but we remained 2 days in the bay to treat with the Neapolitans but alas with such vile traitors what can you do.

"It is not a month since Mack went out with forty thousand men & shamefully to tell those forty thousand have been frightened & beat by about six, eight or ten at most, nor cou'd the brave unhappy Mack make them fight all the officers bought by the French & all the army naturally corrupt. The gallant Mack is now at Capua fighting it out to the last & I believe coming with the remains of his vile army in to Calabria to protect Sicily, but thank God we have got out brave Lord Nelson, the King & Queen & the Sicilians adore, next to worship him & so they ought for we shou'd not have had this Island but for his glorious victory. He is called here nostro liberatore nostro salvatore.

"We have left everything at Naples but the vases & best pictures, 3 houses elegantly furnished, all our horses & 6 or 7 carriages I think is enough for the vile French for we cou'd not get our things off not to betray the Royal familly & as we were in councel we were sworn to secrecy, so we are the worst off; all the other ministers have saved all by staying some days after us. Nothing can equal the manner we have been receved here, *but dear dear Naples*; we now dare not show our love for that place for this country is jealous of the other. We cannot at present proffit of our leave of absence for we cannot leave the Royal familly in their distress. Sir William however says in the Spring we shall leave this as Lord St Vincent as order'd the ships to carry us down to Gibralter. God onely knows what yet is to become of us, we are worn out, I am with anxiety and fatige, Sir Wm. as had 3 days a billious attack, but is now well. My dear adorable Queen whom I love better *than any person in the world*, is allso unwell, *we weep together* & now that is our onely comfort. Sir William & the King are philosophers, nothing affects them thank God, and we are scolded even for showing proper sensibility. God bless you my dear Sir. Excuse this scrawl & believe me, ever your most oblidged & gratefull

"EMMA HAMILTON."

"I had a letter yesterday from Graham at Minorca. He is very well. I never saw him but we are in correspondence. God bless you; give our loves to the Col."

It is pleasant to think that Emma obtained credit in England for what she had done. "I spoke to many," wrote Greville, "and all admire her conduct, and the Prince of Wales particularly of his own accord, told me that after the Queen of Naples' account of Lady Hamilton's conduct to her, she might be assured that all would be made pleasing to her when she arrived again in England. . . . Tell Ly. H. with my kindest remembrances, that all her friends love her more than ever, and those who did not know her admire her." Greville's effusiveness, and the fact that he sent her a dress and declares, "I will be always ready to obey her," speak volumes for the reputation in which she stood. With Greville nothing ever succeeded like success.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SICK CONSCIENCE

(1)

At Palermo Nelson lived with the Hamiltons, making their house his headquarters until, some eighteen months later, he began his journey home. It was in these eighteen months that the passion, already sown at Naples, grew to fruition, and Nelson sank to his lowest level. The harm done to himself was retrieved in part, but only in part; the harm done to Emma was never retrieved.

A vast deal of nonsense has been written about Nelson, with the best of motives. He rose to fame at a moment when England stood very low, not merely in the estimation of the world, but also in her own eyes. Worse than that, England was almost mad with fear of Napoleon, who was openly intent on destroying Great Britain as the one bar to his destiny, and represented to the heated imagination of this country all that was evil. At this point of terror and despondency, when all our greatness seemed to have disappeared, when leaders were non-existent, when repression and severity combined with real want to drive the people desperate, when riots were breaking out in the towns and mutiny was showing its head in the Navy, Nelson won a series of great victories which not only saved us in fact, but were recognised as our salvation. The revulsion of feeling was tremendous, and Nelson's glory swept upwards on a wave of gratitude almost too great for words. The column in Trafalgar Square is more than a monument in his honour; it is a symbol. He stood in the minds of his countrymen infi-

nitely above all other men. The result was that every virtue was ascribed to him, and from being a very human man he was turned into an impossible tin saint.

The cold facts are different. Leaving aside for the moment his genius and general character, it is useless to speak of Nelson's honour as stainless, or even to pretend that his moral record was comparatively good. Nobody is stainless who lives for years on end with another's man's wife, and that not openly but under a cloak of friendship. Nelson got as near as possible to deluding himself that his passion was justified by its greatness, but he knew better in his heart, and at death's door uttered those pathetically revealing words, "I have *not* been a *great* sinner," which, one half suspects, should have a question mark after them.

The degree of his sinfulness is a matter we are fortunately not called upon to assess, but its effect on himself and others is very germane to our subject. Had he been more of the build of his great antagonist—Napoleon—he might possibly have worshipped Emma less, but he would certainly have enjoyed her more. As it was, he could never shake off the influence of his early upbringing, so that between him and the full flavour of sweetness stood a troubled conscience. Nelson would have been happier if he could have been a "great sinner," but he would have been less human and less lovable. The unending warfare between his passion and his principles ruined his physical health, never very robust, and embittered his last years. It is doubtful if he was really satisfied in Emma's presence; it is certain he was infinitely miserable in her absence. For him complete happiness depended on moral approbation, and the object of his life was to marry her. In the fret and fury of his inability to do this he was the moral superior of both Greville and Sir William; in seducing his friend's wife, he was their conventional inferior—Greville would never have dared; Sir William would have disdained.

(2)

This semi-reluctance in his passion is in marked contrast with the swift decisiveness he showed in battle, and for that matter in all naval affairs. The clue is worth following; and if followed, shows a striking distinction between Nelson the sailor and Nelson the man.

It was very rarely that Nelson the sailor had any dealings with Emma—never, in fact, except at Palermo. During this period the sailor drifted helplessly in the wake of the man who was driven by a passion he could not make up his mind to indulge. And during this period, for all that fortune befriended him, the sailor was temporarily under an eclipse. The buffets his pride received, in reprimands from his superiors, in such insults as he had to swallow at Leghorn, in his absence from the field of honour, must have taught him how near he came to disaster. At least it is a fact that when the man had taken the fatal step, henceforward the sailor was proof against Emma's seductions. When duty called, the man might be tempted—and was—but the sailor went his way with merely a lingering glance back and a few half-empty threats. "To the West Indies," Nelson wrote to Emma in 1801, "I would not go, or to the East, was it offered to me to-morrow, altho' it is a sure fortune, for I never would be far from you in case my presence should be necessary." So he wrote, and doubtless in all sincerity; yet, when the need arose, he followed Villeneuve to the West Indies, and would have followed him round the world.

As a sailor Nelson was a genius with all the attributes of genius—clear sight, strength of purpose, tenacity, brilliance, leadership, and a something of ruthlessness. As a man he was wholly different. He could never quite divest himself of the attributes of genius, yet in the man they became insignificant and easily perverted. His clear

sight was absorbed in schemes for Emma's future: "It has made my head ache," he wrote to her on the eve of the Baltic expedition, "stooping so much, as I have been making memorandums for my will. . . . I have been obliged to be more particular than I would, as a wife can have nothing, and it might be taken from you by will or the heirs of your husband." His strength of purpose and tenacity showed themselves in the depth and violence of his passion for Emma; the brilliance degenerated into ostentation; the leadership vanished in an absolute conviction that Emma's "good advice cannot be too closely followed"; the something of ruthlessness betrayed itself in his feelings towards Lady Nelson and Sir William.

Apart from these remnants of his genius, Nelson the man cuts rather a poor figure. Physically he was weak and something of the *malade imaginaire*, allowing any disappointment to throw him into a state of nervous headache and exhaustion. "In his person," wrote Sir William Hotham, nephew of the admiral, "Lord Nelson was thin and had not much either the appearance or the manner of a gentleman." It was a shrewd thrust that meant more then than it means to-day. In character he was simple almost to the degree of being a simpleton, honest and open-handed, especially with his inferiors, but not very sociable, extremely vain and eager for flattery. His biographers have attempted to find some ability for him apart from the sea, and have failed. The fact seems to be, as Lord Holland recorded of him: "his powers of mind seemed to rise, because in action they were comparatively greater; and that circumstance procured for him, from such as had witnessed him in those moments, a reputation for abilities which never appeared in his conversation, correspondence, opinions or conduct elsewhere, and which in truth, nature had not conferred upon him." Morally he was harassed by a pure, but rather narrow, religious training, which he could neither live up to, nor yet entirely

discard. In money matters he was scrupulously exact himself, and generous to the degree of extravagance towards others; and in all services which he considered a moral obligation, unsparing of himself. As a friend he was loyal to a degree—except in the one glaring case of Sir William. In brief, he was, like most of us, a perplexed wayfarer on the road of life, meaning excellently well, but as often as not falling short of his wish. It was a splendid piece of fortune, for himself and his country alike, that the greater part of his life, and by far the most important, was spent on the sea, that element and nurse of his genius, where indecision was forgotten in action and conscience swallowed up in the roar of the guns.

(3)

It was part of the freakish plans of Fate that Emma should have been dazzled by the sailor while she never captivated more than the man. The man by himself she would almost certainly have despised. "His person," wrote Lord Holland, "was insignificant, and announced none of the qualities of a commander." Even with his added greatness she treated him as a naughty child. "Mr Davison," Nelson wrote to her, "came while I was at dinner yesterday. . . . He says you told him to tell me not to send you any more advice about seeing company . . . therefore I will not say a word." Emma had never treated Greville, or even Sir William, so cavalierly. Sometimes she was not content with merely issuing her commands through the first convenient channel, but told him in plain terms what she thought. "Do you know," he wrote again with a touch of pathos, "how I am amusing myself this evening? Troubridge is gone to bed, and I am alone with all your letters except the cruel one, that is burnt, and I have scratched out all the scolding words, and have read them 40 times over, and if you were to see

how much better and prettier they read I am sure you would never write another scolding word to me." Emma knew the power she had over him, and delighted to play in private with the susceptibilities of the man. "My confidence," Nelson writes with an evanescent flash of insight, "is firm as a rock till you try to irritate me to say hard things that you may have the pleasure of scolding me!" What a contrast with Emma's letter to Greville in 1784—"You have made me unhappy by scolding me; how can you when you know my dispotion, when you know it breaks my heart to be scolded and speacily by Greville." The wheel had turned full circle, and it shows more clearly than anything else that Emma cared nothing for the man, but only for the sailor.

(4)

Some description must be given of the Emma that dazzled Nelson the man. It is impossible to draw in words the features of Romney's canvas; they must be seen where they still live in the glowing hues of a master of colours. But at least some account can be given of her effect on others.

In January 1790 the Comte d'Espinchal was entertained at lunch by Monsieur le Baron de Salis. After lunch, says the Comte, "we had some music—a regular concert, in fact." Among the performers was "Mrs Hart, a tall splendid Englishwoman with the face of an angel," who sang "with infinite taste." After the singing there was dancing till it was time to go to the theatre, and the Comte "derived the greatest pleasure from watching a very unconventional and very voluptuous dance called the tarantella, which much resembles the Spanish fandango. It was marvellously danced by some extremely pretty young Neapolitan bourgeoises called Amici; but Mrs Hart endowed it with a degree of grace and voluptuousness

that would have set any man's senses aflame, however cold and insusceptible he might be. This lady . . . is one of the loveliest creatures I have ever seen. . . . Apparently it was to please her benefactor, who is a great lover of art and of the antique, that Mrs Hart cultivated her gift of posing in various attitudes. . . . Without seeing her no one could conceive the illusion produced by this beautiful woman for our delight. Were I Sir William Hamilton, I should pass in review all the goddesses of Olympus; I should frequently see Hebe, Venus and the Graces, and sometimes Juno, but very rarely Minerva. Sometimes to vary my pleasure, I should look into a luxurious boudoir to see Cleopatra—passionate, tender, amorous—receiving Mark Antony; and sometimes, in a bower of foliage, I should find Alcibiades dallying with Glycera."

Some five and a half years later a young naval officer arrived at Naples. He did not altogether like Emma, and subsequently came to like her less, but this is his description written in later years: "Nothing could be more beautiful than her countenance or more commanding than her figure at this time; the first had an unusual mixture of angelic softness with deep and comprehensive intelligence, and the other a compound that would equally have served for the splendour of an Imperial Throne, or the couch of voluptuous sensuality. She had very great command of action, and used to exhibit, even then, to her friends, her various attitudes from the Antique. Her temper seemed very equal, and her husband adored her. In the very centre of an abandoned and licentious metropolis, she had many enemies jealous of her influence with the Queen, but none who could reasonably assail her moral conduct."

Numberless other examples could be given, but enough has been said to show that Emma's attraction was many-sided in the sense that it appealed to persons of widely

AN "ATTITUDE"

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differing temperament—persons as far apart, spiritually and intellectually, as the Prince of Wales and Goethe. And yet at bottom it was essentially one. Apart from her physical beauty, her attraction lay entirely in an unaffected naturalness, which fascinated even her enemies, so that Lord Minto, while privately declaring over and over again that she was no lady, kept on visiting—Nelson, as he thought, Emma, in fact—and writing to "My dearest Ly. Hamilton" that "I certainly never plaid the fool so much in my life as in those eight days and I am no wiser yet. But you and she [the Queen] are I believe both accustom'd to make fools of wiser men."

Emma made no secret of her origin; she was quite frank about her efforts to improve, and never pretended to be better than she was. Fundamentally it was this last virtue, and a very uncommon one, that she lost when she became connected with Nelson, and fundamentally it was this loss more than all else which ruined her. How and why she came to think too highly of herself, and the consequences, are the story of her life henceforward.

Naturalness is not incompatible with vanity, though the combination is rare. Emma was vain, but her vanity consisted in a desire to be thought well of, rather than in a sense of superiority. She was delighted with others for being delighted with herself, and made no secret of it. This type of vanity is too whole-hearted to be hurtful, and in a sense is closely akin to humility. It puts the admirers in a position of superiority by giving unwonted value to their opinions.

Besides her frankness, with its accompanying virtue of truthfulness, Emma was physically brave. There are stories much to her credit, as for instance the occasion when the *Foudroyant* was off Malta and during the night drifted under the guns of the fort. The next morning the French opened fire. "Lord Nelson," says Parsons, an eye-witness of the scene, "was in a towering passion

and Lady Hamilton's refusal to quit the quarter deck did not tend to tranquillize him. . . . Just at this moment a shot from Long Tom of Malta. . . . struck the unfortunate fore-topmast, inflicting a deadly wound. His lordship then insisted upon Lady Hamilton's retiring, who did not evince the same partiality for the place of 'de safety' as our illustrious friend the Prince of ——."

Such, in outline, was the woman who dazzled the man Nelson, and no one need be surprised. The pity is that she did not understand Nelson's duality, nor yet her own feelings. Had she done so, she would have been saved many pangs and not a little of the scorn that has been poured upon her. She believed that she had been the inspiration of the great sailor, when in fact she had been the infatuation of the more or less commonplace man. She accepted the ardent, but erroneous declarations of the man as being the considered opinion of the almost infallible genius. No wonder that she formed wrong conclusions. On her own premises, the statement of her claims in later years was logical enough. Nelson had declared over and over again that the victory of the Nile was hers and not his. Who could possibly know better than Nelson? And so she drew the inevitable conclusion. "Here," she writes, "I may be allow'd to ask what sum would this country or its government have given before that battle for its attainment, and what less should be given for that instrument which led to it, and without which all hope, all opportunity of success must have been abandon'd?" There really is no answer except that Nelson was wrong.

Just as Emma mistook the man for the sailor, so Nelson confused the real with the ideal. Probably, man-like, he was merely smitten with her face, and on that basis built up a paragon of all the virtues. She had qualities that fitted in with his ideal, and they would have confirmed him, if confirmation were necessary. But Nelson, when his affections were gained, was not critical. When Lord Barham

asked him to select his own officers before Trafalgar, he replied, " Choose yourself, my lord, the same spirit actuates the whole profession ; you cannot choose wrong." What he felt of the Navy, he felt with greater force of Emma.

But if Nelson tended to idealise Emma, his passion was founded on something much more concrete. There are passages in his letters, many passages, that are frankly and unabashedly sensual, and on the whole they outnumber the more spiritual. There is no need to quote them : they were written for Emma's eyes alone. They need not have been mentioned but for the tendency to blame Emma for all the harm, and praise Nelson for all the good in this story of passion. It is a curious perversion of the facts, since in a way Emma was the more idealistic of the two. The confusion arises out of their types of character. Emma was the Pagan, delighting in colour and life ; Nelson was the Christian with spiritual longings and a devotion to duty. Yet what appealed to Emma was Nelson's glory, and what infatuated Nelson was Emma's face. Emma turned Nelson's glory into a show and revelled in the plaudits of the crowd, the blowing of trumpets, and the display of bunting. It is easy enough to call her adventuress and say she was vulgar. Yet it was the glory alone she coveted, not the passion.

Nelson was the born altruist, needing another for whom to live. He could do nothing for himself. He stole the pears as a schoolboy for his friends. He chose to be a sailor to relieve his father's finances. He despaired of his career so long as it was merely his own, but became fired when he thought of acting for King and Country. He told Fanny truly enough that he desired riches only for her. In the same way he thought of fame simply as something to give Emma. " I transfer it all to my guardian angel." The trouble was that across this selflessness came a passion essentially human and inevitably selfish, so that Nelson found himself torn in two directions.

Both were aiming at something fundamentally alien to their natures, and this mixing of opposites made both untrue to themselves. Yet the fact remains that Emma was merely selling her body for what she conceived to be glory. Nelson was selling his soul for what he knew to be an unhallowed passion.

(5)

It was while Nelson was at Palermo that he was making up his mind to fling his scruples to the wind; and so far as can be told, it was not until the very end that he came to his decision. Meanwhile the tempest within swamped all other feelings, and left him helpless beneath the continual rebuffs administered by his superiors. The course of events can be narrated quite briefly.

Nelson had barely reached Palermo when he received news that Sir Sidney Smith—his junior—had been appointed to command in the Levant, apparently over his head. Actually it was a mistake, and might have been very opportune if it had aroused Nelson to the danger of his course. It did arouse him sufficiently to protest, but when the Admiralty had explained matters, Nelson fell back again into his fool's paradise.

Meanwhile towards the end of January 1799 the French entered Naples and set up the short-lived Parthenopean Republic.

The next few months were a period of intense depression for Nelson, while he struggled vainly to make Turks, Russians, and Portuguese do his proper work, and struggled equally vainly at Palermo either to conquer his passion or to yield to it whole-heartedly. Nothing went right.

While Nelson dallied at Palermo, Cardinal Ruffo was despatched by the King to Italy and made steady progress in reconquering the country, so much so that towards the end of March Nelson had serious thoughts of sailing to

blockade Naples. He was, however, easily persuaded to send Troubridge in his place. How ineffectual Nelson had become is evident from his letter of the 17th of April to St Vincent, in which he explains the straits to which the Maltese had been reduced and his inability to persuade the Neapolitan royalty to send them proper succour. "The only chance of saving Malta," he declared, "is by my friend Ball." He himself could do nothing. "I am useless," were his own words. Meanwhile he had to give up his own ship to Troubridge and hoist his flag once more in a transport.

So matters remained until the 12th of May, when news reached him that the French fleet had escaped from Brest and was making for the Mediterranean.

Nelson at once ordered his ships to sail to the aid of St Vincent, but—as a crowning shame—wrote to excuse himself in person. "You may depend upon my exertion, and I am only sorry that I cannot move [myself] to your help, but this island appears to hang on my stay. Nothing could console the Queen this night but my promise not to leave them unless the battle was to be fought off Sardinia." The next day his shame and agitation were almost stronger. "What a state I am in. If I go, I risk and more than risk, Sicily, and what is now safe on the Continent; for we know, from experience, that more depends on *opinion* than on acts themselves. As I stay, my heart is breaking; and to mend matters, I am seriously unwell." But the sheer disgrace of it all was too much for him, and on the 20th of May he set out in person. His spirits at once rose, and he wrote joyfully to St Vincent: "Your Lordship may depend that the squadron under my command shall never fall into the hands of the enemy; and before we are destroyed, I have little doubt but the enemy will have their wings so completely clipped that they may be easily overtaken." The possibility of being destroyed was real enough; Nelson had eleven ships while

the French numbered twenty-five. Yet Nelson was content, being once more on active service and doing his duty.

But the flash was brief. On the 28th of May he heard that the French had put into Toulon, and therefore he sailed back again to Palermo, excusing himself to St Vincent as best he could.

Hitherto his reputation had carried him through. But within a few days St Vincent, who valued him highly and was prepared to leave him the widest discretion, handed over the command to Lord Keith. Another Pharaoh had arisen who knew not Joseph, and was not disposed to let the brilliance of Aboukir excuse the scandal of Palermo.

With the advent of Keith as commander-in-chief begins the period when Nelson, by flat disobedience of orders, brought about a state of affairs when either his resignation or his recall seemed inevitable. But before the inevitable had happened, there took place a series of events at Naples which have formed the subject of furious argument ever since. It was on the 21st of June 1799 that he sailed for Naples with Emma and her husband, arriving in the Bay three days later.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BAY OF NAPLES

(1)

The flight from Naples had a real effect on Emma's position. Hitherto her progress upwards had rested upon the growing favour of the Queen and the growing weariness of Sir William. Now her position altered radically.

When the outcome of warlike policy had been defeat, Ferdinand awoke out of his indolent stupor. His Queen's political measures had meant nothing to him so long as they were confined to questions of reform; but when her policy had driven his capital to revolt and himself into exile, he decided to act for himself. Not that he really took the reins in hand; all he did was to push the Queen completely into the background, with the result that government was reduced to pleasure, diversified with hunting. Ferdinand had no policy, nor the rudiments of kingcraft: his only idea was to fasten Nelson to his side.

This negation of responsibility and absolute dependence on Nelson meant, as Damas wrote, that "everything at this time—the policy and proceedings of the government, every project that was put forward, and all correspondence with other Courts—was subject to Nelson's ruling." It is easy to see the reaction of all this upon Emma. Nelson was not in a position to carry out the tasks which fell to him. He would have had enough to do directing naval operations; he had far too much to do when there was superadded the direction of Neapolitan politics. At the least he needed interpreters and a clerical staff, and he had no one but Emma and her husband. Sir William

was prostrate beneath the fatigues of the flight and also querulous at the loss of home comforts. Nelson had therefore to look to Emma alone. At the same time the Queen, who would not tamely accept dismissal, appealed to Emma to forward her plans. Hence from being a mere post office, Emma became the Queen's champion and Nelson's right hand. The change can be seen in her new attitude. Now for the first time she interfered in politics with something approaching an authoritative voice, and in minor matters took a certain amount of responsibility.

The one object in which all the actors in this little drama were united was the reconquest of Naples. The King was thirsting for vengeance ; the Queen was hoping that victory might set her once more in the saddle ; Sir William was panting for the decencies of civilisation ; Nelson was anxious to retrieve the disaster of his advice ; Emma was, as usual, the echo of Nelson and the Queen.

Had they known it, the prospects were bright. The French were in no favourable position ; treachery alone had enabled them to enter Naples, and the Republic which they proclaimed was supported by no element in the kingdom beyond a handful of discontents. In any case the Republic was not two days old when Cardinal Ruffo was instructed to return and do his best.

This Cardinal is an interesting figure. With a commission in his pocket appointing him vicar-general, he landed in Calabria on the 8th of February 1799. Apart from his commission he had nothing—neither money, arms, nor troops. Yet somehow he made his way, raising an army of peasants, procuring money, and steadily reconquering the country. Naturally he had to use such methods as were open to him, and the promises he scattered broadcast proved a burden in after years. His army had to be officered, and he made any likely brigand a colonel, major, or captain as he saw fit. He had to have money,

and he raised it by promising future exemption from taxation.

Meanwhile he found little opposition. Damas, without much exaggeration, declares that he never met a Frenchman in his whole campaign. At all events, with his so-called Christian army, composed of the offscourings of the gaols and the ragged followers of bandit chieftains, he swept up town after town, and finally, on the 13th of June, reinforced by some Russian and Turkish troops, appeared before Naples. The whole town was soon captured, with the exception of the Castle of St Elmo, to which the French garrison withdrew, and the Castles of Uovo and Nuovo, held by the Neapolitan Jacobins. On the 19th of June he granted an armistice, and negotiations began for capitulation. On the 22nd formal capitulations were signed for the two castles held by the rebels, under which the garrisons could either return home or go to France. Two days later the British squadron arrived, and Nelson at once rejected both armistice and capitulations. For the moment there is no need to go into details. Suffice it to say that the two castles were surrendered to Nelson on the 26th; the Jacobins were allowed to embark, but were subsequently seized; and St Elmo was captured on the 13th of July, two days after the King himself had arrived in the Bay. Then followed a terrible vengeance. "I do not mean to say," comments Damas, "that those who were condemned were blameless; but boys of 16, and only sons, were executed for yielding to force, or to fashion, or to ignorance; and this I can never recall without horror. . . . For more than four months Naples languished in the tortures of a venal inquisition."

These proceedings shocked the whole of Europe. The feeling is well exemplified in a letter written by Lady Bessborough: "I wrote you word of Ly. H's letter, but I am miserable at the accounts I have read of the cruelties

at Naples, but worst of all that my dear delightful Nelson should have let himself be drawn in to do so disgraceful an action as to annul a sign'd treaty upon the faith of which (whether good or bad) his enemies resigned their arms. I hope the account is not true, as I have only read it in the newspapers, for I cannot bear it."

How far Nelson was to blame, and how much of the blame can be passed on to Emma, are questions that have been hotly canvassed ever since. Certain points have been fully established and can be dealt with briefly. It is clear that though at the outset Ruffo had plenary powers, his discretion had been subsequently limited by more positive orders. One of those limitations was that he should not negotiate with the rebels. In assenting to the capitulations therefore he had exceeded his powers. Whether Nelson had actually been invested with authority to override the Cardinal is not so clear, but hardly matters. The King was entirely dependent on Nelson, and would have given him any authority for which he had asked. There is also good reason to suppose that the capitulations had not been effectively executed when Nelson arrived. Hence it may be said that Nelson was technically within his rights in annulling the treaty.

A more serious charge is that on the 26th of June Nelson enticed the rebels out of the fort under a pretence of agreeing to the treaty. Here the answer is not so clear, and it is better to give the facts. At first both Nelson and the Cardinal proved obstinate, but on the 26th of June Nelson, for some reason, unknown, changed his attitude. He wrote to Ruffo, "I am just honoured with your Eminence's letter, and as his Excellency Sir William Hamilton has wrote you this morning that I will not on any consideration break the armistice entered into by you, I hope your Eminency will be satisfied that I am supporting your ideas." That afternoon the castles were surrendered and the Jacobins embarked on vessels in the

harbour. On the 28th of June Nelson received despatches from Palermo repudiating the treaty, and in consequence seized the vessels with the persons upon them.

Nelson's apologists draw a distinction between the armistice and the capitulations. They argue that the Jacobins had surrendered unconditionally, or at least had come out knowing Nelson's views. This was certainly the opinion that Nelson expressed on many occasions. On the other hand the prisoners presented at least two memorials to Nelson, in which they claimed to have come out under the capitulations, and asked that the articles should be honoured. As Nelson could speak no Italian and the Cardinal no English, there may have been some confusion. Indeed, Nelson had very little to gain by trickery. The position of the castles was desperate unless the French fleet, said to be in the Mediterranean, arrived to succour them. If it did come, Nelson was not strong enough to resist, and the presence or absence of a few Jacobins would have made little difference. Apart from his natural repugnance, Nelson had nothing but infamy to gain by foul play, and a misunderstanding seems to be the obvious solution.

But all this arguing of technicalities overlooks one crucial point. The gravamen of the charge consists, not in any minor point of powers and punctilio, but in the fact that the conscience of the world was shocked. What shocked the world was not the details of capitulation, but the cruelties that followed. The real question, therefore, is not whether Nelson satisfied the law, but how far he was implicated in, or responsible for, the state of horror and degradation which fell upon Naples.

This is a question of attitude and outlook. Nelson and Ruffo represented opposite views, as Nelson himself very clearly saw. "The Cardinal and myself," he wrote, the day after his arrival, "have begun our career by a complete difference of opinion. He will send the rebels to

Toulon; I say they shall not go. He thinks one house in Naples more to be prized than his sovereign's honour."

Not many of the Cardinal's letters remain, but what there are, together with the answers, display his attitude beyond dispute. For him the revolution was first and foremost civil war, a terrible disaster that should be ended as soon as possible. He did not believe that the roots of the Republic went deep; the ringleaders were few and the vast majority of the people had been led away by ignorance, by pressure, by folly, and by the very flight of the King. They should be won back as gently as possible; it was better to open their eyes than to slit their throats; it was better to pardon than to proscribe. His Calabrese peasants were ferocious brigands, and it was more than he could do to keep them from pillage and murder; his allies were fierce Russians and uncivilised Turks—they must be sent out of the country with all speed. The right course was pardon, amnesty, forgetfulness. From the beginning he was for ever pressing this view upon the Court, quietly putting by the insistent demands for punishment, quietly conciliating the Jacobins by appointing the repentant to posts about his person. So much can be gathered without a shadow of dispute from the correspondence that remains. A few extracts shall suffice.

On the 1st of May 1799 the King replied to one of his letters, "I agree entirely with you that it will not be necessary to make any very searching inquiries." On the 17th of the same month the Queen wrote: "I must nevertheless confess that I am not of your opinion as to the advisability of dissembling and forgetting or even of giving rewards for the purpose of winning over the chief of the rogues. . . ." On the 21st of June Ruffo sent Acton a long letter, in which he explained how the fear of pillage often created Jacobins. "It seems," he

concludes, " that these considerations may cause us to be merciful towards the rascals shut up in the castles and to feel pity for the many hostages imprisoned in them. I do not know what the terms will be, but they will be very merciful for a thousand reasons, which it would be useless to detail, and which may be imagined from what I have already said. I do not think it possible to restore order in the country rapidly under any system, but it will be absolutely impossible to do so with new methods. . . . I am trying to reorganise the rest, and it is very difficult to discover honest people who have never been found wanting."

If the attitude of Ruffo is clear, the attitude of the Court is even more clear; they were panting for vengeance. Early in April Ruffo was ordered to prepare a scheme of punishment, and, by way of instructions, was informed that " His Majesty desires that the penalty be either death or transportation beyond the realm." At the same time the Queen wrote to him: " I wish to warn you about another matter. Rebellious Naples and her ungrateful citizens may make no terms. Order is to be re-established in that monstrous city by rewarding the faithful and inflicting exemplary punishments on the wicked." Her words to Gallo a month later were stronger still: " I beg of you that there be no truce, no pardon, no agreement with our wretches. They must be punished—death for their leaders; deportation for the others. I loathe Naples, and with the exception of the lowest classes, all her infamous inhabitants. A general massacre would not cause me the slightest grief."

These few quotations show clearly enough the divergent views of the Cardinal and the Court; they also go to prove that in granting the Jacobins terms the Cardinal was acting on his own responsibility, and if not actually contrary to express orders, at least contrary to what he knew to be the wishes of the Court. So much may be

admitted straight away; but it is an admission much to the honour of the Cardinal's memory.

There remain to be considered the views of Nelson and Emma. Of Nelson's views we are left in no doubt. Consistently and from the beginning Nelson breathed out fire and sword against the rebels. As early as the 30th of March, when giving Troubridge instructions, he bade him bear in mind "that speedy reward and quick punishment is the foundation of good government." On the 8th of May, while still at Palermo, he wrote to Acton concerning a Neapolitan officer: "The King must instantly order his trial, and if guilty of cowardice or treachery he must be shot in the most infamous manner." On the 29th of June he ordered Caracciolo—a traitor—to be hanged at the yardarm, and on the 30th wrote to the King: "The most notorious of the rebels I have in irons on board the fleet, and I hope they will meet the same fate as Caracciolo, who did not attempt to deny the justness of his sentence." In a word, Nelson adopted the views of the Court. To use his own phrase of later years, he "Sicilified his own conscience." He did it, too, in spite of Keith's warning, "for God's sake do not let those good people carry their heads too high."

There were at least two reasons for his attitude. First, there was his natural hatred of rebels, and secondly there was Emma. She was the mouthpiece of the Court, and urged its views. Nelson was still on the rack of desire unfulfilled, and, while torn with the inward battle of conscience and passion, had allowed the sailor to come under her influence—an influence not designedly bad, but hopelessly ill-informed—and the result has been a blot on his fair name. The sting lies in the fact that a weak Italian Cardinal, for whatever reason, took the right course, standing for an enlightened and humane policy, while Nelson, for all his upright character, lent the weight of his prestige to the wrong.

There is only one bright spot in all this sorry business. Nelson could not know the savage cruelty at the bottom of the King's heart. If the execution of justice had been left in his hands, it might have been rigorous, but not cruel. "Recollect," he wrote to Mrs Cadogan, "that we are restoring happiness to the kingdom of Naples and doing good to millions." Indeed, after the King's arrival Nelson seems to have had very little to do with Naples: "We have now," Sir William wrote to Greville, "nothing political to think of, and Lord Nelson is occupied with the taking of Capua and Gaeta." In short, Nelson's fault lay more in espousing the wrong course than in any particular action. Unwittingly he gave scope to the King's savage nature.

(2)

Nelson's share in these doings has been sketched only because Emma has so often been made the scapegoat. It is now necessary to deal with the part she actually played.

On first arriving at Palermo Emma had suffered a natural and very feminine reaction. As she wrote to Greville, "God only knows what yet is to become of us, we are worn out, I am with anxiety and fatige. . . . My dear adorable Queen whom I love better than any person in the world, is allso unwell, *we weep together* and now that is our onely comfort . . . and we are scolded even for showing proper sensibility." But Emma was made of sterner stuff, and when feelings had been relieved, her buoyant hopes rose to greater heights than before. The reason is not far to seek; but a few words of explanation are necessary.

Emma had for years been living in the closest intimacy with the Queen, and being essentially of an imitative nature, had borrowed not only the views but also the character-

istics of the Queen. It is therefore worth while discussing the keynote of the Queen's character. It can be stated in three words—love of glory. Her character has been fully drawn by Alquier, the French Ambassador at Naples in 1803, but for the present purpose one extract will suffice: "The Queen spoke to me of the First Consul. 'It would be pardonable,' she said, 'if I did not like him; well, I would willingly travel 200 posts to see him. If I dared compare myself to that great man, I should say that I had one feeling in common with him, and that is love of glory. But he has pursued his object on a large scale and in the whole world, and has obtained it, while I have sought for glory in gutters and have done nothing but prick my finger tips. When you write, give my compliments to the First Consul . . . tell him, above all, that I never cease admiring the skill he has shown in profitting by a time when, Catherine and Frederick no longer alive, there are none but very despicable men on the thrones of Europe.'" The bitterness is evident; the gnawing envy no less; and both confirm her claim that she loved glory.

It was this same love of glory that had been growing in Emma's heart all these years. Within her narrow circle she had won glory enough and seemed to have no further outlet. In her home she was the centre of attraction, the one goddess for whom the shrine was fitted up. At Court she was the one confidante of the Queen whose position was unrivalled and unassailable.

The changed conditions at Palermo gave her new scope. With the Queen deposed from power, and the King inactive, the political house was swept and garnished but untenanted. Sir William was old and weary, suffering from bilious attacks and rheumatism, and prone to peevish complaints about the climate, the work, and the losses he had sustained—an old man, suddenly, without power and without influence. There remained only Nelson. He

was King and Queen and Sir William rolled into one, as well as the victor of Aboukir. Inevitably she turned towards him as the embodiment of glory. There is not one single sign of real love, and no unmistakable sign of any lower passion. What she loved in him was simply his glory; what she hoped to gain from him was the sense of domination.

At Naples she has experienced the thrill of power by parading the streets with him. At Palermo she was permitted, almost forced, to share in his work. Her path to power was open and obvious, and if it was founded on a false estimate in Nelson's heated brain, how was she to know?

So long as Nelson was present in person Emma's rôle was in every sense secondary. But when Nelson had to sail Emma automatically rose into his seat; she opened his correspondence, she interviewed persons on his behalf, and so far as she knew his plans and wishes, did her best to forward them. Not that she did much. Her main effort seems to have been the despatch of corn to Malta, and this, though possibly done at her instigation, seems actually to have been carried out by Sir William. Her actions after all mattered little; it was her feelings that counted—the taste of power, the glow of greatness.

Meanwhile Nelson's passion grew, swamping his sense of duty more and more. In May he felt impelled to sail, but soon came back again, hovering on the verge of joining St Vincent in his search for the French fleet, but not getting beyond Maritimo, an island off the west coast of Sicily, and not so very, very far from Palermo. He could not make up his mind; he could not quiet his conscience. At last Emma made it up for him, and perhaps it was the best thing that could happen. She wrote to him on the 12th of June.

Emma to Nelson.

"*Thursday evening, June 12th* [1799].

"I have been with the Queen this evening. She is very miserable and says that although the people of Naples are for them in general, *yet* things will not be brought to that state of quietness and subordination till the fleet of Lord Nelson appears *off Naples*. She therefore begs, intreats, and conjures you, my dear Lord, if it is possible, to arrange matters so as to be able to go to Naples.

"Sir William is writing for General Acton's *answer*.

"For God's sake consider it, and do! We will go with you, if you will come and fetch us.

"Sir William is ill; I am ill: it will do us good.

"God bless you. Ever, ever, your's sincerely

"E. Hamilton."

This letter shows clearly the type of pressure which Emma brought to bear. It was not a question of her personal pleasure or wishes, but of her genuine beliefs. Fresh from her interview with the Queen, she thought the reduction of Naples a matter of tremendous moment, while Nelson knew perfectly well that his real duty was to join in the pursuit of the French fleet. What was the result? For a week or so he continued to cruise about off Maritimo, torturing himself with indecision, and finally made up his mind to do as Emma asked. She thought she was acting rightly, he knew he was doing wrong, and his decision cost him many a pang.

"I am agitated," he wrote to Sir William, "but my resolution is fixed. For Heaven's sake suffer not any one to oppose it. I shall not be gone eight days. No harm can come to Sicily. I send my Lady and you Lord St Vincent's letter. I am full of grief and anxiety. I must go. It will finish the war. It will give a sprig of laurel to your affectionate friend, Nelson."

The next day he was at Palermo and, taking Emma and her husband on board, sailed for Naples, reaching it, as already described, on the 24th of June.

(3)

The parts which Emma had to play at Naples itself were many and varied. There was first the duty imposed upon her as Sir William's wife. The old man was quite unaware of his growing inefficiency, and still more of his growing disrepute. In a very real sense his position was tragic. With the best of motives and against his real inclinations he was following a course which was to ruin his own reputation, involve his wife in scandal, destroy Nelson's peace of mind, and bring misery upon Naples and infamy on its rulers. He had long been anxious to retire, or at least take a prolonged rest in England, but he "cannot think of leaving their Sicilian Majesties in their present moment of distress," and he explained in another letter what he had at the back of his mind: "I knew well that if some negociation was to be necessary between His Majesty his nobles and people, no one cou'd go between them with such a probability of success as myself." This duty, as he conceived it, was one in which Emma shared; he expected her to second and assist him.

Then she had a very real, through humble task to perform in translating and interpreting for Nelson. Sir William realised the position very acutely from the more superficial angle. "As I realy now see," he wrote on one occasion, ". . . that hitherto Lord Nelson, not knowing the language, could not have done without our assistance, and I see that his Lordship is very desirous of my staying with him a little longer, as is the Court, I will have patience." To increase the irony, he ends the letter: "I love Lord Nelson more and more—his activity is wonderful, and he loves us sincerely."

Emma had a third task which called for more skill and finesse than she possessed. As already explained, the

flight from Naples had cut short the Queen's power. As early as the 1st of January she knew her fate, and wrote to Emma: "everything that I see, foresee, hear, feel, disquiets me wholly. I am neither consulted nor even listened to and I am extremely unhappy." In spite, however, of being ignored, the Queen attended meetings of the Council and maintained a profitless attempt to sway Acton and her husband. The only result was fresh humiliation for herself.

When the King finally decided, at Nelson's urgent request, to sail for Naples, he refused to let the Queen accompany him, and in despair she wrote to Emma: "at present, my dear Milady, I rely on your friendship to write me everything, for all my correspondents, seeing my want of influence and fearing to compromise themselves, remain silent. But I hope that my good friend Emma will not forget me, albeit an exile at Palermo." Her good friend Emma was very far from forgetting her. With praiseworthy loyalty, but miserable stupidity, she attempted, under the king's nose and certainly against his wishes, to create what she called a "Queen's party"—and imagined that she had succeeded. More amazing still, she turned to the Lazzaroni, who in any clash of opinion could not possibly side with the Queen they detested against the King they adored. If any proof were wanted of her real ignorance as well as her real devotion to the Queen, it can be found in the following letter, where she tells of her activities in her own words.

Emma to Greville.

"On board the Foudroyant,
"Bay of Naples.
"*July 19th.* 1799.

"Dear Sir,

"We have an oppertunity of sending to England & I canot let pass this good opertunity without thanking you

for your kind remembrance in Sir Williams letter. Everything goes on wel here, we have got Naples, all the forts & tonight our troops go to Capua. His Majesty is with us on board were he holds his Councils & leves every day. General Acton & Castelcicala with one gentleman of the bed chamber attend his Majesty. Sir Wm. & Lord Nelson with Acton are the Kings Counsellers & you may be assured that the future government will be most just & solid. The King has bought his experience most dearly, but at least he knows his friends from his enimies, he allso knows the defects of his former government & is determined to remedy them for he has great good sense & his misfortunes have made him steady & look in to himself. The Queen is not come, she sent me as her deputy for I am very popular, speak the Neapolitan Language & consider'd with Sir W. the friend of the people. The Queen was waiting at Palermo & she was determined as their had been a great out cry against her not to risk coming with the King for if it had not succeeded his arrival & not been well receved she wou'd not have been the blame nor be in the way. We arrived before the King 14 days & I had privatly seen all the Loyal party & having the head of the Laseronys, an old friend, he came in the night of our arrival. He told me he had 90 thousand Laseronis ready at the holding up of his finger, but onely twenty with arms. Lord Nelson to whom I enterpreted got a large supply of arms for the rest & they were deposited with this man. In the mean time Calabreas were commiting murders, the bombs we sent in to St Elmo were returned & the citty in confusion. I sent for this Pali, the head of the Laser's & told him in great confidence that the King wou'd be soon at Naples & that all we required of him was to keep the citty quiet for ten days from that moment. We gave him onely one hundred of our marine troops, he with these brave men kept all the town in order & he brought the heads of all his 90 thousand round the ship

on the King's arrival, & he is to have promotion. I have thro him made the Queens party & the people at large have prayd for her to come back & she is now very popular. I send her every night a messenger to Palermo & she gives me the orders the same. I have given audiences to those of her party & setled matters between the nobility & her Majesty. She is not to see on her arrival any of her former evil counsellers, nor the women of fashion alltho Ladys of the bedchamber formerly her friends & companions & who did her dishonour by their desolute life. *All, all* is changed, she has been very unfortunate but she is a great woman & has sense enough to proffit of her past unhappiness & will make for the future *amende honorable* for the past. In short, if I can judge it may turn out fortunate that the Neapolitans have had a dose of Republicanism but what a glory to our good King, to our Country, to ourselves that we, our brave fleet, our great Nelson has had the happiness of restoring the King to his throne, to the Neapolitans their much loved King & being the instrument of giving a future good, solid & just government to the Neapolitans. The measures the King is taking are all to be approved of, the guilty are punished & the faithfull rewarded. I have not been on shore but once; the King give us leave to go as far as St Elmo's to see the effect of the bombs. I saw at a distance our despoil'd house in town & Villa Emma that have been plunder'd & Sir Wm's new appartment, a bomb burst in it but it made me so low-spirited I dont desire to go again. We shall as soon as the government is fix'd return to Palermo & bring back the Royal familly for I foresee not any permanent government tell that event takes place nor wou'd it be politick after the hospitality the King & Queen receved at Palermo to carry them of in a hurry, so you see their is great management required. I am quite worn out for I am enterpreter to Lord Nelson, the King, Queen & altogether feil quite shatter'd but as

things go on well that keeps me up. We dine now every day with the King at 12 a clock, dinner is over by one, his Majesty goes to sleep & we sit down to write in this heat & on board you may guess what we suffer. My mother is at Palermo, but I have an English lady with me who is of use to me in writing & helping to keep papers & things in order. We have given the King all the upper cabbins, all but one room that we write in & receve the ladies who come to the King. Sir Wm & I have an appartment below in the ward room & as to Lord Nelson he is here & there & every where, I never saw such a zeal & activity in my life as in this wonderfull man. My dearest Sir Wm, thank God, is well & of the greatest use now to the King. We hope Capua will fall in a few days & then we shall be able to return to Palermo. On Sunday last we had prayer on board, the King assisted & was much pleased with the order, decency & good behaviour of the men, the officers. &c. &c. Pray write to me. God bless you, my dear Sir & believe me ever yours most sincerely

"EMMA HAMILTON.

"*P.S.*—It wou'd be a charity to send me some things for in saving all for my royal & dear friend I lost my little all; never mind."

Meanwhile, amid all her useless bustle, the essential woman remained below. There is no need at this late date to refute the oft-refuted scandals of her cruelty. The stories of her tigerish delight in the death of the rebels, the story of her gloating over the dead Caracciolo, have been handed about from one scandalmonger to another, to have picturesque details added as fancy or invention could supply; but they have been disproved as often, and have dropped to pieces of their own internal contradictions. Nelson himself has recorded the scope of her activities in a letter to Mrs Cadogan: "Our dear Lady is also, I can

assure you, perfectly well; but has her time so much taken up with excuses from rebels, Jacobins, and fools that she is every day most heartily tired." Masses of letters written to her, pleading for the lives of rebels, still remain, and one may well believe that she did her best to moderate the cruelties of the King. There are three good reasons for this belief. First, there is no evidence in her letters, as there is in the letters of all the other principals, suggesting that her thoughts were bent on vengeance, while there is evidence that, being on the spot and viewing the horrors at first hand, her heart failed her. Secondly, the Queen, whether out of womanly feeling or merely out of pique at being left behind, besought Emma to use all her influence in the scale of moderation. Lastly, Emma was by nature good-hearted and kind; it is recorded that Nelson's sailors "when threatened with punishment for misconduct, applied to Lady Hamilton, and her kindness of disposition and Lord Nelson's known aversion to flogging generally rendered the appeal successful." The defects of her character did not include cruelty, as indeed the appeals made to her abundantly prove. Not even the most desperate waste time in appealing to a tigress.

CHAPTER XX

A SORRY SCHEME OF THINGS

(1)

Nelson had no sooner handed over to the King than he flatly disobeyed orders. Keith ordered him to sail for Minorca, and Nelson, with his eyes on Emma, replied, "I think it right not to obey your Lordship's orders." Keith took no notice. He was a bluff, good-humoured sailor, whose sound common sense and robust vigour come badly out of the inevitable comparison with Nelson's sensitive and elusive genius. Keith had a strange spirit with which to cope, and a spirit made all the more wayward by the stress of a great passion. On the whole he showed wonderful forbearance, and if not wholly appreciative of Nelson's qualities, was at least indulgent to his moody and provocative junior, passing over Nelson's perversities with a shrug of the shoulders that would have been more than kind had Nelson been less than great.

Having thrown discretion to the winds, Nelson suffered all the pangs of suspense. His health went to pieces, or rather his belief in his own ill-health grew almost unbearable. But at least he was consistent; having disobeyed to remain near Emma, he followed his appointed path to the end, and in due course returned with her to Palermo.

Emma to Greville.

"Foudroyant,
"Bay of Naples.
"*August* 5, 1799.

"As Sir Wm. wrote to you to day my dear Sir, I will onely say that the Kingdom of Naples is clear. Gaeta &

Capua have capitulated & we sail tonight for Palermo having now been seven weeks & every thing gone to our wishes. We return with a Kingdom to present to my much loved Queen. I have allso been so happy to succeed in all my comissions & every thing I was charged with. The King is in great spirits. I have receved all the Ladies for him & he calls me his grande Maitresse. I was never taking him at his word but as I have had seven long years service at court I am waiting to get quiet. I am not ambitious of more honners, il est bonne d'etre chez le Roi, mais mieux d'etre chez soit. We have had the King on board a month & I have never been able to go once on shore, do you not call that slavery. I believe we shall come here in the Spring. It is necessary, for our pockets & bodys want bracing. Captain Oswald will give you this, he has been indefatigable under Troubridge & goes home to be made post. God bless you & believe me my dear Greville (tis not a crime to call you so) your sincere & affectionate

"EMMA HAMILTON."

"My mother is at Palermo longing to see her Emma. You cannot think how she is loved & respected by all. She has adopted a mode of living that is charming, she as a good appartment in our house, allways lives with us, dines &c. &c. onely when she does not like it, for example, great dinners she herself refuses & as allways a friend to dine with her & La Signora Madre dell' Ambasciatrice is known all over Palermo the same as she was at Naples. The Queen has been very kind to her in my absence & went to see her & told her she ought to be proud of her glorious & energick daughter that has done so much in these last suffering months. Their is great preparations *for our return*, the Queen comes out with all Palermo to meet us, a landing place is made, balls, suppers, illuminations all ready, the Queen has prepared my cloaths, in

short, if I have fag'd I am more than repaid. I tell you this that you may see I am not unworthy of having been once in some degree your eleve. God bless you. "

The preparations to which Emma alludes were magnificent indeed. Fête followed fête, and gift was heaped upon gift. Nelson received the Duchy of Bronte and honours galore ; Emma was loaded with jewels and dresses. Meanwhile, by a stroke of luck, Nelson was temporarily invested with the command of the Mediterranean, and was thus freed for the moment from all fear of interruption. He made Palermo his headquarters, and the Hamiltons' house his home.

Never was his infatuation more unfortunate. Up to this point it had led him into personal disquiet and humiliation. Now it was to do worse. Until he had succumbed to Emma's fascinations, his one object had been the destruction of the French army in Egypt. Had he conducted the operations in person, it is possible that Napoleon might have slipped through his fingers, but the supposition does less than credit to Nelson's vigilance. Says Damas, putting the case against Nelson at its worst, yet not exaggerating much, " It is to his state of moral slumber that we owe Bonaparte's career. There can be no doubt that, had Nelson not been in this lethargic condition, his natural watchfulness and activity would have insured the capture of the frigate in which Cæsar and his fortune sailed from Egypt to France. Bonaparte should build a shrine to Lady Hamilton ; she should head the list of all the happy chances that led him to the throne. This fact is as true as it is curious."

(2)

By this time the fumes of absolutism had mounted to Emma's head ; both she and Nelson began to regard themselves as above all law and beyond all restraint. In

her case the feeling was unchecked; in Nelson's it was haunted by the sense of responsibility and the murmurings of a dying conscience. Under Emma's guidance, their private life became more and more reckless. Let us take a few pictures, almost at random. Damas, a contemptuous onlooker, says of Emma and Nelson, that "they had everything in common—money, faults, vanities, wrongdoing of every kind. Nelson had become a mere caricature of Rinaldo, the slave of an Armida who had neither brains, nor modesty, nor magic. The officers of the English fleet were mortified and disgusted; there was a social mutiny among them, and Nelson, whom they would have obeyed implicitly in a battle, was treated by them everywhere else without any of the respect and consideration that were his due. The Queen of Naples, who was too kind-hearted to set limits to her gratitude, encouraged the vanity of Nelson and his mistress; she gave a magnificent fête, and exhibited effigies of Nelson, Lady Hamilton and her husband, Sir William, in a temple of victory. Young Prince Leopold himself led Nelson into the temple, and crowned both him and his statue. Nelson came out of the temple more vainglorious—if less truly glorious—than he entered it."

And now the version of an enthusiastic young midshipman: "Bending her graceful form over her superb harp on the *Foudroyant's* quarter-deck, each day after dinner, in Naples Bay, she sang the praises of Nelson, at which the hero blushed like a fair maiden listening to the first compliment paid to her beauty."

Sir William's account was tinged with resignation. "You may judge, my dear Charles, what it is to keep a table for all the poor British emigrants from Naples, who have none, and for the officers of the fleet, as Lord Nelson lives in the house with us, and all business, which is immense, is transacted in our house. I began so and it must go on, tho' I should run myself a little more in debt, as

it cannot last long, and finally I hope the King and his ministers will take my circumstances into consideration; if not, you know I am a philosopher and will do as well as I can."

One last picture—the most unfortunate, since it proves the manner of tale which was spreading over Europe. Lady Minto wrote to her sister: "Mr Rushout and Colonel Rooke, whom I knew in Italy, are here. Mr Rushout is at last going home. He escaped from Naples at the same time as the King did in Nelson's ship, and remained six months at Palermo; so I had a great deal of intelligence concerning the Hero and his Lady. . . . Nelson and the Hamiltons all lived together in a house of which he bore the expense, which was enormous, and where every sort of gaming went on half the night. Nelson used to sit with large parcels of gold before him and generally go to sleep, Lady Hamilton taking from the heap without counting and playing with his money to the amount of £500 a night. Her rage is play, and Sir William says when he is dead she will be a beggar. However, she has about £30,000 worth of diamonds from the royal family in presents. She sits at the Councils and rules everybody and everything."

This last account is certainly exaggerated; Emma's diamonds were not worth £30,000, and the expenses of the house were shared. But in the main the accusations were true. Sir William was finding it hard to pay his way, and before he left Sicily was £2000 in Nelson's debt—an unfortunate state of affairs for an old man with a pretty young wife. The gambling is abundantly proved, and the disfavour with which it met is a curious sidelight on the recent change in public opinion. Charles James Fox had lost far more than £500 a night without forfeiting one atom of his popularity. Troubridge, who felt the degradation into which Nelson was sinking very keenly, remonstrated with both him and Emma, beseeching them not to barter away

health and fortune. "Pardon me, my Lord," he wrote to Nelson, "it is my sincere esteem for you that makes me mention it. I know you can have no pleasure sitting up all night at cards; why then sacrifice your health, comfort, purse, ease, everything to the customs of a country where your stay cannot be long. . . . Your Lordship is a stranger to half that happens, or the talk it occasions; if you knew what your friends feel for you, I am sure you would cut all the nocturnal parties; the gambling of the people at Palermo is publicly talked of everywhere. I beseech your Lordship to leave off. I wish my pen could tell you my feelings, I am sure you would oblige me."

But enough has been said of this sorry scheme of things. The picture is clear enough, with its gambling, its fêtes, its continual flux and flow of guests in the ever-open house; debts piling up, discretion dying or dead; the insolence of power and the flouting of opinion.

(3)

The end came with the return of Lord Keith to the command. That rough and rugged old seaman would very probably not have conducted affairs with the skill and tact that Nelson showed for all his dallying at Palermo, but being unfettered he would not have committed the crucial mistake that Nelson made. Lord Minto could never have said of Keith as he somewhat despondently said of Nelson: "I have letters from Nelson and Lady Hamilton. It does not seem clear that he will go home. I hope he will not for his own sake, and he will at least, I hope, take Malta first. He does not seem at all conscious of the sort of discredit he has fallen into, or the cause of it, for he writes still, not wisely, about Lady Hamilton and all that. But it is hard to condemn and use ill a hero, as he is in his own element, for being foolish about a woman who has art enough to make fools of many wiser than an

admiral. He tells me of his having got the Cross of Malta for *her* and Sir William sends home to Lord Grenville the Emperor of Russia's letter to Lady Hamilton on the occasion. All this is against them all, but they do not seem conscious."

Keith could make allowances with a half-humorous resignation so long as Nelson's love affairs did not actually impede his own plans. But he had no mind to let the public good suffer by any vapours of a junior's mind. On returning to the Mediterranean he realised that the sole remaining work of outstanding importance was the capture of Malta and the two ships (the *Genereux* and the *Guillaume Tell*), one in Malta harbour, which had escaped from the Battle of the Nile. This was essentially Nelson's work, the rounding off and completion of his brilliantly begun campaign. Hitherto Nelson had ignored it, handing over the task to Ball. Keith was determined that now Nelson should take the work seriously in hand. He summoned Nelson to meet him at Leghorn; on the 25th of January 1800 the two sailed for Palermo, where they stayed for eight days, and then set out for Malta, arriving there on the 15th of February.

Nelson's attitude was entirely that of a naughty child, seeing how far he could go. He did everything possible to exasperate the long-suffering Keith, who described the stay at Palermo afterwards in a brief but expressive manner: "the whole was a scene of fulsome vanity and absurdity all the *long* eight days I was at Palermo." Nelson's really petty feelings were amply portrayed in his letters to the Hamiltons. Approaching Palermo from Leghorn he wrote to Emma: "Having a commander-in-chief, I cannot come on shore till I have made *my manners* to him. Times are changed; but, if he does not come on shore directly I will not wait. . . . It has been no fault of mine that I have been so long absent. I cannot command; and now, only obey."

When the fleet had left for Malta, Nelson became more

than ever convinced that Keith was treating him harshly. His evident chagrin at the brusque manner in which Keith ignored his adoration of Emma led him into the most delicious bathos. "Could Lord Keith," he wrote to Sir William, "suppose that I did not wish to write to your house even if I had not been absent half an hour—he must have been a beast to have thought so—but, as I sent on board the *Queen Charlotte* [Keith's flagship] to say that if the brig was going to Palermo I wanted to write, it was neglectful not to wait for my letter, or to send the Commander to me. I am far from well, and have half promised Jefferson [the surgeon] to take an emetic this evening."

In spite of his petulance which drove him to emetics, Keith had done him an excellent service. Scarcely had the fleet arrived off Malta when *Le Genereux* appeared and was promptly snapped up by Nelson. "We may truly call him a *heaven*-born Admiral," wrote Ball to Emma, "upon whom fortune smiles wherever he goes. We have been carrying on the blockade of Malta sixteen months, during which time the enemy never attempted to throw in great succours. His Lordship arrived off here the day they were within a few leagues of the island, captured the principal ships and dispersed the rest, so that not one has reached the port."

It so happened that in the manœuvres Nelson had ignored Keith's signals, and perhaps the consciousness of this affected him when he went to report his success. At all events he comes once more rather poorly out of the comparison. Keith, either not knowing or very wisely overlooking this new breach of orders, wrote warmly of Nelson's success, reporting that he "on this occasion, as on all others, conducted himself with skill, and great address, in comprehending my signals, which the state of the weather led me greatly to suspect."

To Sir William, Nelson wrote: "You will have received

my express from Syracuse, and I know what pleasure it will give you to find that Nelson, by leaving his Admiral without signal, for which *I may be broke*, took these French villains. Lord Keith received my account and myself like a philosopher (but very unlike you), it did not, that I could perceive, cause a pleasing muscle in his face." To Emma he was more bitter: "had you seen the Peer receive me, I know not what you would have done; but I can guess. But never mind! I told him that I had made a vow, if I took the *Genereux* by myself, it was my intention to strike my flag. To which he made no answer." One feels sorry for Keith having to deal with a such pig-headed genius. What was he to do? Scold Nelson, as he deserved, like a naughty boy? or sigh regretfully at the passion which seemed to be spoiling the Navy's chief ornament? No wonder Nelson's account "did not cause a pleasing muscle in his face," and all honour to him for the forbearance which kept his mouth shut. It was enough to provoke an angel.

Four days later Keith received despatches which made his presence off the Riviera essential; he therefore handed over to Nelson the blockade of Malta. Even in this, which was a compliment, Nelson's fretted nerves found a cause of complaint, and he replied in his usual strain on such occasions that his health was all to pieces: "my state of health is such that it is impossible I can much longer remain here. Without some rest, I am gone. I must therefore, whenever I find the service will admit of it, request your permission to go to my friends at Palermo for a few weeks and leave the command here to Commodore Troubridge." To Sir William he wrote bluntly, but untruthfully: "Lord Keith is commander-in-chief, and I have not been kindly treated."

All his friends combined to dissuade him from any fatal step, Troubridge writing to Nelson direct, and Ball trying the more roundabout method of working through

Emma. But he was too far gone in the blindness of passion, and she too deep in the folly of conceit. Nelson was in the mood to find captious thwarting of his wishes in the commonest of everyday actions. It is probable enough that Keith's orders were influenced in part by a desire to save Nelson from the consequences of his own folly. Certain it is that Keith told him explicitly that Palermo being too distant was no longer to be used as headquarters, Syracuse or Messina being substituted. If a real kindness lay at the bottom of Keith's order, it was combined with a real necessity. Palermo drew Nelson as surely as the Pole Star draws a magnet. On the 4th of March he told Emma "my health is in such a state, and to say the truth, an uneasy mind at being taught my lesson like a schoolboy, that my DETERMINATION is made to leave Malta on the 15th of this month, or the first moment after the wind comes favourable."

Emma did nothing to stop him. We have no proof of her feelings, but may guess that her thoughts were more of tickled vanity than of either Nelson's fame or her country's good. She was rapidly being infected with that madness which the gods send when they have decreed a mortal's doom, and the sad part of it is that while Nelson was risking all for the sake of an illicit love, she was losing all for the heady joy of a fictitious fame.

On the 10th of March Nelson left Malta for Palermo, and within three weeks had the mingled shame and gladness of hearing that his own ship, the *Foudroyant*, had captured the *Guillaume Tell*—the last of the French fleet defeated at Aboukir—the last, and Nelson not there! If he did not wholly appreciate his shame, others did. Keith wrote him a letter, admirable in its restraint, but unmistakable in its meaning: "All I shall say is, to express my extreme regret that your health should be such as to oblige you to quit your station off Malta at a time when I should suppose there must be the finest prospect of its

reduction. I should be very sorry that you did not accomplish that business in person, as the *Guillaume Tell* is your due, and that ship ought not to strike to any other. If the enemy should come into the Mediterranean, and whenever they do, it will be suddenly, I should be much concerned to hear that you learnt of their arrival in that sea, either on shore or in a transport at Palermo."

The Admiralty were less forbearing. A month or so later Nelson received a letter from Earl Spencer. "It is by no means my wish or intention," wrote the First Lord, "to call you away from service, but having observed that you have been under the necessity of quitting your station off Malta on account of your health, which I am persuaded you could not have thought of doing without such necessity, it appeared to me much more advisable for you to come home at once, than to be obliged to remain inactive at Palermo while active service was going on in other parts of the station."

Before this letter reached him he had applied for leave to return to England, nominally on grounds of ill-health, but actually for reasons now to be explained.

(4)

For some time Sir William had been failing in health, and, worse than that, failing in ability. The one led to an ardent desire to return home, a desire augmented by the ever-growing volume of debts. The other, combined with Nelson's presence, led him to leave official matters more and more in Emma's hands. His own letters show her steady increase of importance. The letters of others show his own growing unimportance. "Captain Morris," wrote Lady Elgin in October 1799, "went to Sir William to deliver some despatches he had for Lord N. He read them and then called Lady Hamilton out of the room. They had a conference, and when she came back she said,

'Sir William, we shall not go to the country today, you must dress yourself and go to Court after breakfast.' Poor Sir William asked 'Why?' 'Oh, I will tell you presently.' Is it not a pity a man who had gained so much credit should fling himself away in this shameful manner?"

The mere fact that Emma and Nelson, or Emma alone, did the work, would not have mattered provided the work had been properly done. But it was not. How should it have been? Emma had not the ability and was too much wrapped up in the Queen. She was no doubt saved from glaring mistakes by Nelson, but it must be remembered that he was a seaman, not a diplomatist, and that he was far too much dazzled by Emma to make full use of his wits. There was powder for explosion directly the true state of affairs became known.

At first there was the fame of Nelson's victory, and the praise due to Emma for her conduct during the flight, to cover up the facts. But as the months passed and scandals began to filter through, as stories of cruelty at Naples were coupled with her name, as news of Nelson's conduct spread around, resentment grew and inquiries began to be made. It was Nelson's shortcomings that finally led to disaster.

As one report after another of breach of orders came through, the Admiralty grew restive, putting it down to Emma's influence, and administered first remonstrance and then sharp censure. The culprits were not without warning, but were too blinded to understand. Emma wrote a letter of justification to Greville, and thought that settled the matter.

Emma to Greville.

"25*th Feb.* 1800

"DEAR SIR,

"I recd. your letter by Mr Campbell. He is lodged with us. We find him a pleasant man; and shall

write fully by him. He will tell you a little how we go on, as to our domestic happiness. We are more united and comfortable than ever, in spite of the infamous Jacobin papers, jealous of Lord Nelson's glory, and Sir William's and mine. But we do not mind them. Lord N. is a truly virtuous and great man; and because we have been fagging and ruining our health, and sacrificing every comfort in the cause of loyalty, our private characters are to be stabbed in the dark. First, it was said, Sir W. and Lord N. fought; then, that we played, and lost. First, Sir W. and Lord N. live like brothers; next, Lord N. never plays: and this I give you my word of honour. So I beg you will contradict any of these vile reports. Not that Sir W. and Lord N. mind it; and I get scolded by the Queen and all of them for having suffered one day's uneasiness.

"Our fleet is off Malta; Lord Nelson has taken *Le Genereux*, and was after the frigates; so the attempt to relieve Malta has failed.

"I have had a letter from the Emperor of Russia, with the Cross of Malta. Sir William has sent his Imperial Majesty's letter to lord Grenville, to get me the permission to wear it. I have rendered some services to the poor Maltese. I got them ten thousand pounds, and sent them corn when they were in distress. The deputies have been lodged at my house; I have been their Ambassadress, so his M. has rewarded me. If the King will give me leave to wear it abroad, it is of use to me. The Q—n is having the order set in diamonds for me; but the one the Emperor sent is gold. I tell you this little history of it that you may be au fait. Ball has it also, but I am the first Englishwoman that ever had it. Sir W. is pleased, so *I am happy*. We are coming home; and I am miserable to leave my dearest friend, the Q—. She cannot be consoled. We have sworn to be back in six months; and I will not quit her till Sir William binds himself to come back. How-

ever, I shall have a comfort in seeing some of my old friends; and you in particular. We have also many things to settle. I think I can situate the person you mention about the Court, as a Camerist to some of the R. F—y, if her education *is good*. It is a comfortable situation *for life*; so I will bring her out. The Q. has promised me. Let this remain entre nous."

But a letter to Greville was hardly sufficient, failing a radical alteration. There was no such alteration, and events under Emma's handling went from bad to worse. Lord Elgin, possibly on instructions, paid a week's visit to Palermo on his way to Constantinople, and concluded that a change in the British representative was essential. He passed his opinion on to Lord Grenville, and the result was that early in April 1800 Paget arrived in Sicily to take over from Sir William.

The news came as a shock to the poor old man. To Emma and the Queen it came more like a thunderbolt. They tried their best to oust the usurper. First they persuaded Sir William to behave in a manner that was simply ungentlemanly. On their advice he informed Paget that he would not present his letters of recall until it was convenient, and that would be the day before his departure. Then they asked the King to request Paget's recall; but the King was growing heartily sick of Emma and refused. The Queen meanwhile more or less openly insulted Paget at Court, keeping him waiting for three-quarters of an hour, and then barely addressing him. Paget, in his correspondence, exonerates Sir William, but adds "I am sorry to say that Lord Nelson has given more or less in to all this nonsense."

But in spite of all kicking against the pricks, in spite of Emma's conviction that Sir William would be sent back again, the end had come. "Sir William," wrote Lord Grenville, "is not yet arrived here, but when he does

come I shall explain to him without reserve the utter impossibility of his going back to Naples in any public situation." Such had been the result of Emma's experiment as a "stateswoman."

Sir William's recall finally settled Nelson's hesitations. He resigned his command the moment he knew Emma was to return home. "I have a letter from Lord Nelson," Keith told Paget, "telling me he is going to Malta with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, but nothing more. I have sent him leave to quit and a frigate to take his Lordship home. . . . Anything absurd coming from the quarter you mention, does not surprize me."

CHAPTER XXI

A STROLLING TROUPE

(1)

For the best part of two years Emma had been travelling downhill, and, true to her impetuous character, had covered a lot of ground. Emma at her worst could be appalling, and by May 1800 she was near the bottom. Before Nelson came there had always been something to check her—love at Edgware Row, prudence at Naples. After his arrival, and especially after the recapture of Naples, there was nothing; all that was coarse and vulgar in her had free play. Worse than that, he taught her to be conceited, so that even her better qualities were spoilt by arrogance. If it had been merely conceit, it might not have mattered much, and when Society in England had sufficiently snubbed her pretensions, the bright and buoyant Emma might have returned. But the canker went far deeper.

Before returning home, Nelson and the Hamiltons cruised about the Mediterranean, and during the cruise Nelson's long fight with his conscience ended. He consummated his passion, and soon learnt that he was to become a father. From that moment there was no looking back for the two—only a long weary path of deception, of hopes unfulfilled, of sudden stabbing joys and fierce torturing anxieties.

But, while both suffered, the effects on the two were vastly different. It was always indecision that tortured Nelson, and the plunge at least freed him from the hopeless treadmill of hesitation. He had reached the bottom,

and henceforward slowly but surely rose up again; the Sailor was not much longer to be trammelled by passion, and in due course even the Man won through into calmer waters.

It was far otherwise with Emma. Her whole life was changed for the worse. Strange as it may seem, it was then, and not till then, that Emma—to use her own phrase—lost her sense of virtue. From that moment a drop of gall seems to have entered into her soul, which spread as the days went on and infected all her actions. Henceforward there is an empty ring even about her happiest moments, a forced gaiety when she is glad, a bitter defiance when she is sad, a sense of drowning care and smothering thought.

On the 31st of May the party returned to Palermo, to find that the strained relations between the King and Queen had snapped at last, and that the Queen was going for an indefinite visit to Vienna. They took her on board and sailed to Leghorn, where she began to chop and change her mind with more than her usual hysteria. At one moment she was going to return to Palermo, at the next to continue her journey to Vienna.

Her indecision caused more trouble between Keith and Nelson. When she had apparently made up her mind to return, Nelson demanded a man-of-war to take her back, and Keith refused. "I must go," he wrote with half-humorous resignation, "to Leghorn to land the wretched fugitives and to be bored by Lord Nelson for permission to take the Queen to Palermo, and Princes and Princesses to all parts of the globe; to every request I have said my duty to the nation forbids it. God knows it is true."

Keith's refusal caused positive consternation. The Queen approached him in person and even tried the effect of tears, but he would offer nothing more than a frigate to carry her to Trieste, and offended still further by saying

bluntly that Emma had been in command of the fleet long enough. The snub was too much for the Queen. "She is very ill," wrote Lady Minto, "with a sort of convulsive fit, and Nelson is staying to nurse her; he does not intend going home till he has escorted her back to Palermo. His zeal for the public service seems entirely lost in his love and vanity, and they all sit and flatter each other all day long."

Keith's adamantine attitude, aided by the French victory at Marengo which threatened to close the road by land, won the day, and the Queen finally determined to travel across Italy. She made a great fuss over her farewells, and gave one parting thrust at Keith, which he took very lightly. "Her Majesty," he wrote, "took leave of everyone in public but me, which gave me no concern."

The party set off only just in time, passing within a mile or two of the advanced French posts. Except Emma, who wanted to visit the various courts of Germany, they were all in the worst of humours, and met with frequent disaster. Emma's coach overturned twice and she was badly bruised. Nelson had to put up with insults from incompetent Neapolitan officers on the sea voyage from Ancona to Trieste, and felt his position keenly; Sir William was ill, and the Queen and thirty-four of her suite down with fever. "You can form no idea of the *helplessness* of the party," was the description given by Miss Knight, who accompanied them.

So much for the view of the travellers from within—helpless, disgruntled, ill. Only one thing was needed to complete the irony—the acclamations and illuminations of the towns through which they passed.

(2)

Unfortunately for her fame, Emma's conduct in Austria and Germany was recorded by eye-witnesses. No doubt

something may be written off, but the damning fact remains that Emma showed an unpardonable vulgarity of soul, and an utter recklessness of conduct. Nelson had spoilt her in the most profound, as well as in the most superficial, sense.

At Vienna the party were received with almost royal honours. Everyone vied in doing them honour. They were entertained by princes; they were acclaimed by the people; the city was illuminated nightly, and Nelson's name given to fashions and dresses as well as to the compositions of Haydn. He had already written a pæan of triumph in Nelson's honour, and now set to music some verses of Miss Knight, and accompanied Emma when she sang them. Not that the party always treated Haydn with respect. "Lady Hamilton," wrote Lord Fitzharris, describing a ball at Prince Esterhazy's, where both were present, "is without exception the most coarse, ill-mannered, disagreeable woman I ever met with. The Princess had with great kindness got a number of musicians, and the famous Haydn, who is in their service, to play, knowing Lady Hamilton was fond of music. Instead of attending to them she sat down at the Faro table, played Nelson's cards for him, and won between £300 and £400. In short, I could not disguise my feeling, and joined in the general abuse of her."

After a month's stay the party bade farewell to the Queen, who was profoundly affected and wrote in her parting letter, "I repeat what I have already said, that at all times and places, and under all circumstances, Emma, dear Emma, shall be my friend and sister, and this sentiment will remain unchanged." Remembering her volatile, hysterical nature, it is perhaps hardly necessary to add that within a few years, when Emma needed a friend, the "sentiment" had completely changed.

From Vienna they went to Prague, then to Lowositz and so to Dresden, where they made another prolonged

stay. A certain Mrs St George, a lively Irish widow who afterwards became Mrs Trench, was living there at the time, and recorded much of their doings in her private journal. It was afterwards published, and makes sad reading.

The party arrived on the 2nd of October, and the next day met Mrs St George at the house of Mr Elliott, the British Ambassador. "It is plain," the lady wrote, "that Lord Nelson thinks of nothing but Lady Hamilton, who is totally occupied by the same object. She is bold, forward, coarse, assuming and vain. . . . Lord Nelson is a little man without any dignity . . . Lady Hamilton takes possession of him, and he is a willing captive, the most submissive and devoted I have seen. Sir William is old, infirm and all admiration of his wife, and never spoke today but to applaud her. . . . After dinner we had several songs in honour of Lord Nelson, written by Miss Knight and sung by Lady Hamilton. She puffs the incense full in his face; but he receives it with pleasure and snuffs it up very cordially."

The first impression was not modified with time, though Mrs St George saw the party almost every day. On the 4th they went to the opera, where Emma and Nelson "were wrapped up in each other's conversation during the chief part of the evening." On the 5th she was invited "to see Lord Nelson dressed for Court"—a curious form of amusement which seems to have interested her. On the 6th she went to a concert with them, and on the 7th saw Emma's Attitudes, for which she had nothing but admiration. Emma had been showing many signs of what the lady called "friendship at first sight, which I always think more extraordinary than love of the same kind." But in spite of Emma's advances, in spite of the evident beauty and attraction of the Attitudes, Mrs St George recorded that "she does not gain upon me. I think her bold, daring, vain even to folly, and stamped with the

CARICATURE OF AN "ATTITUDE"

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manners of her first situation much more strongly than one would suppose, after having represented Majesty and lived in good company fifteen years. Her ruling passions seem to me vanity, avarice, and love for the pleasures of the table. She shows a great avidity for presents and has actually obtained some at Dresden by the common artifice of admiring and longing."

On the 8th they all dined at the Prime Minister's. Mrs St George records on this day that "the Electress will not receive Lady Hamilton on account of her former dissolute life. She wished to go to Court, on which a pretext was made to avoid receiving company last Sunday, and I understand there will be no court while she stays. Lord Nelson, understanding the Elector did not wish to see her, said to Mr Elliot, 'Sir, if there is any difficulty of that sort, Lady Hamilton will knock the Elector down, and —— me, I'll knock him down too!'"

Her account of Elliott's farewell entertainment on the 9th is too racy to be omitted, and for all its unfortunate disclosures, rings true. The Attitudes were repeated "with great effect." Then "all the company, except their party and myself, went away before dinner; after which Lady Hamilton, who declared she was passionately fond of champagne, took such a portion of it as astonished me. Lord Nelson was not behindhand, called more vociferously than usual for songs in his own praise, and after many bumpers proposed the Queen of Naples, adding, 'She is my Queen; she is Queen to the backbone.' Poor Mr Elliot . . . endeavoured to stop the effusion of champagne, and effected it with some difficulty; but not till the Lord and Lady, or, as he calls them, Antony and Moll Cleopatra, were pretty far gone. I was so tired, I returned home soon after dinner, but not till Cleopatra had talked to me a great deal of her doubts whether the Queen would receive her, adding 'I care little about it. I had much sooner she would settle half Sir William's

pension on me.' After I went, Mr Elliot told me she acted Nina intolerably ill, and danced the Tarantola. During her acting Lord Nelson expressed his admiration by the Irish sound of astonished applause, which no written character can imitate, and by crying every now and then 'Mrs Siddons be ——.' Lady Hamilton expressed great anxiety to go to Court, and Mrs Elliot assured her it would not amuse her, and that the Elector never gave dinners or suppers. 'What!' cried she, 'no guttling?' Sir William also this evening performed feats of activity, hopping round the room on his backbone, his arms, legs, star, and ribbon, all flying about in the air."

This very complete turning of the prim Elliott's house into a bear garden is not without its humorous side. The evident and helpless dismay of the highly proper official almost condones the high jinks of the strolling troupe, and in any case the pathetic loyalty of the fiery little Nelson, threatening the bulky German Elector with his frail left arm and whooping with excitement at Emma's acting, must touch a responsive chord in any man's heart.

The next day they left for Hamburg, where they stayed ten days, meeting persons famous and unknown to fame. Finally, after a stormy crossing, they reached Yarmouth on the 6th of November 1800. From Yarmouth onwards their progress was one long triumph, ending in London on the 9th of November.

CHAPTER XXII

THE RIVALS

(1)

Neither Emma nor Nelson had the least idea of what they were returning to.

Emma was coming back to England after an absence of fifteen years, broken only by one short visit when her thoughts had been full of her coming marriage. When she left she had seen only one side of the upper classes—that side which was most free and unrestrained at a time when no side was unduly hampered by restraint. Since then she had lived in a foreign country where such poor shreds of respectability as English society always preserves, even at its worst, had been non-existent. For the last eighteen months Nelson's presence and the misfortunes of the Neapolitan Court had placed her in a position where restraint was unnecessary and respectability almost impossible. Her idea of England could only have been drawn from memories of the past in no way corrected by her residence abroad. Yet while the French Revolution had had the effect of making her insolent, it had subdued English Society, thus widening the gulf between Emma's ideas and the reality. Incredible as it sounds, at this, her first proper introduction to English Society, when only thirty-five years of age, and still magnificently beautiful, Emma was a sort of Rip Van Winkle, coming into a new generation with the views and outlook of a long dead past.

The same was largely true of Nelson. He had lived all his life at sea, and could not in any case be expected to know much of sentiments and fashions. But his position

was far stranger than that. He had sailed away the younger son of an unknown parson and was coming back a peer of the realm, with the best-known name in England. He was bound to find himself in unaccustomed surroundings.

Both were wholly inexperienced, and both were thoroughly above themselves. These two facts had much to do with the manner in which they faced the one tremendous problem so obviously before them—the problem of Lady Nelson.

Emma's attitude was simple enough. She knew that in 1791 the Queen had refused to accept her, and though she was hopeful of storming St James's, she had qualms. Her plan was to enter the portals under the ægis of Lady Nelson. Fanny was to be not merely her sponsor, but her best friend. It was easy for her to adopt this attitude because she was bothered by no silly jealousies. Nelson was merely a lift, raising her to sky-scraping heights, and she had no difficulty in sharing a lift with another woman, especially a woman who held the cards of admission.

Nelson's attitude is more perplexing. In the first place, it is strange that he should have been content to drift at this crisis of his life. At sea, no one was so painstaking in his plans to cope with every possibility. One would have thought that, in his mind at least, Nelson would have broken with his wife long since. Yet this never seems to have occurred to him as either necessary or desirable. In a real sense his blindness was due to his religion. He would not, or could not, be whole-hearted in wrong-doing; he would not, or could not, admit the truth even to himself. Emma was his wife in private, or as he put it with unconscious irony, "in the face of heaven." In the eyes of the world Fanny was still his wife, as Emma was still Sir William's. The religion which was not strong enough to keep him true to Fanny, by a curious process of reasoning insisted on his being true to both. Nelson was not the

man to shirk a duty, however difficult it might be; and duty clearly bade him arrange for a *ménage à quatre*—Fanny and Emma, Sir William and himself all living together, if possible under the same roof. It was an ideal solution by which the unnatural *tria juncta in uno* might be resolved into two natural pairs, Sir William entertaining Fanny with his charming gossip and pleasant wit, while Emma and Nelson drained to the dregs the huge hogshead of their passion. The result was a battle royal between the two women.

(2)

Little enough is known of Fanny, and that little is not prepossessing. Nelson had been attracted to her as a young man by what he was pleased to call esteem. It is quite impossible to know what he meant. The lady was no doubt virtuous and good, but she does not seem to have been blessed with either beauty or brains, was singularly devoid of all enthusiasm, and had little or nothing in common with her eager and religious-minded husband.

With no outstanding quality, nor the illusion of one, Fanny was unlikely to fall below Nelson's expectations. What she was when he married her that she continued to be until the end. Similarly with no violent feelings on his part, nothing but a calm " esteem " that could neither die of its own extravagance nor rise from its humdrum level, there was no reason why his affection should alter, and apparently it did not. But a fundamental experience had happened to him; for the first time in his life he had fallen completely in love. Had Fanny been his mother or his sister, had she been content to occupy the place he proposed, he would have welcomed her beneath his roof. It is difficult to appreciate his feeling; it is almost more difficult to grasp his lack of understanding; that he should have thought her capable for one moment of accepting

the situation is almost unbelievable. Yet such was the case, and perhaps it is hardly necessary to add that Fanny regarded his genuine attempt to run this wholly impossible course simply as insult added to injury. Nelson, on his part, felt that she was not giving him credit for his kindly intentions, while she was thwarting the biggest thing in his life. It made him angry with her for the first time, and in that anger they parted—never to meet again.

It is clear that Fanny, for all her righteousness, shows up very poorly beside her brilliant rival. This crisis disclosed at once her negative strength and positive weakness —the two qualities most obvious in the scanty records that remain. Her letters to Nelson are dull to a degree. They are crowded with the bare bones of petty gossip, unrelieved by a single flash of wit or observation, and generally confined to the ailments of her friends and neighbours. Reading her letters one gets the impression that everyone in England was either ill or just recovering from an illness. "Good Captain Locker has a stiff hand which prevents him from writing." "Sir Peter Parker has fallen downstairs and is very much bruised." A little boy "died on his passage from Gibraltar to Minorca." "Captain Pearson has had a relapse of the yellow fever." "Susanna has recovered from her illness." "Admiral Parker is in a very ill state of health. Lord St Vincent is still confined to his house." Her inordinate interest in ill-health sprang from her own ailing state. In one letter she informed Nelson that "I am clothed in two suits of flannel —and I hope I shall be the better for it," a fact unlikely to fill the most acquiescent husband with great enthusiasm.

She was not only ailing but also dull. She rarely mentioned entertainments, but she did say on one occasion that "in consequence of our father's illness, I declined going to Mrs Walpole's last night, by way of persuading me she mentioned that the Prince of Wales, two of his brothers and the Stadholder, the Duke of Gloster if he

could and a great many fine people—I believe she will give me up for being too humdrum." If Nelson was ambitious, so retiring a wife was hardly likely to help him. As her letters betray a lack of ambition, so they show a helplessness that must have irritated the Nelson whom no difficulty could daunt. "I do not know what to do," was her comment on a letter from a friend about his son going to sea: "I have seen such terrible quarrels in my own family about money that I dread to say a word." So it goes on, dull, unenterprising, ineffective. Nelson could not but compare these letters unfavourably with the flaming, racy, energetic epistles of Emma. The former were clean contrary to his every instinct; the latter appealed to him at all points.

(3)

The struggle between Emma and Fanny began early. As far back as 1798, the year of Aboukir, Fanny's son, Josiah Nesbit, had written Fanny a letter which aroused her suspicions, and she apparently contemplated coming out in person. But her incorrigible lack of enterprise restrained her, and Nelson, with perhaps a sigh of relief, was able to write in April 1799: "you would by February have seen how unpleasant it would have been had you followed *any* advice which carried you from England to a wandering sailor. I could, if you had come, *only* have struck my flag, and carried you back again, for it would have been impossible to have set up an establishment at either Naples or Palermo."

Thereafter the stories of scandal came thick and fast, but Fanny found herself completely helpless. The most she could do was to write a letter at the end of March 1800, which was not lacking in dignity or in affection, but which was in no sense calculated to regain an erring husband. "I can with safety," she remarked *à propos* of

nothing, "put my hand on my heart and say it has been my study to please and make you happy—and I still flatter myself we shall meet before very long. I feel most sensibly all your kindnesses to my dear son, and I hope he will add much to our comfort. Our good Father has been in good spirits ever since we heard from you—indeed my spirits were quite worn out, the time had been so long. I thank God for the preservation of my dear husband, and your recent success off Malta—the taking of the *Genereux*—seems to give great spirits to all. God bless my dear husband and grant us a happy meeting." This was apparently the last letter he received from her before landing in England on the 6th of November.

Not knowing where or when Nelson would arrive, Fanny and her father-in-law had gone up to London to wait for him. Consequently the first meeting was postponed, and it was Emma who rode by Nelson's side through the frantically cheering crowds that lined the way from Yarmouth onwards. The party reached London on the 9th of November, and drove to Nerot's Hotel in King Street (the site of which is now occupied by St James's Theatre), where Emma and Fanny met for the first time face to face.

Rumour has it that Fanny's reception of her husband was cold. There must have been constraint, and Fanny was never effusive; but the coldness must have been emphasised by comparison with Emma's gushing welcome after the Nile. And besides all such memories, there were other comparisons for Nelson to make. He had not seen Fanny for more than two and a half years; she was forty-two years old—seven years older than Emma—and if we may judge by her flannel suits, frankly accepting the resignation and disabilities of confessed middle age. How was she, with no ally beyond her legal claim, to cope with the brilliant rival with whom she was now face to face in front of Nelson? Fanny with her poor weapons of

cold reserve and plaintive helplessness; Emma with her glorious beauty and overflowing strength.

Nelson had hoped, no later than at Leghorn on the homeward journey, that "Lady Nelson and himself would be much with Sir William and Lady Hamilton, and that they would all very often dine together, and that when the latter couple went to their musical parties, he and Lady Nelson would go to bed"; and by way of bribing his wife had bought her a "magnificent lace trimming for a court dress" at Hamburg. True to that hope, they all dined together on this first evening of his return—the one evening that poor Fanny might well have claimed after so weary a while of waiting. But she was to have few evenings of her husband alone. The next day Nelson dined at the Guildhall. A few days later there was a dinner at the Hamiltons' house in Grosvenor Square. The day after the four went to a theatre together, where Fanny was overcome by Nelson's marked attentions to Emma and fainted.

The scandal was becoming notorious. The very day of their arrival Troubridge urged Miss Knight to drop the acquaintance; others were equally emphatic. The Court, though bound to receive Nelson, were cold and neglectful. As for Emma, she was ostracised.

Nelson became more obstinate as the slights and difficulties multiplied. As Miss Knight recorded, with more worldly wisdom than Nelson possessed: "He felt irritated, and took it up in an unfortunate manner, by devoting himself more and more to her, for the purpose of what he called supporting her."

Emma was not so easily discouraged. She continued her efforts to win Fanny, to whom she wrote about this time: "I would have done myself the honour of calling on you and Lord Nelson this day, but I am not well nor in spirits. Sir William and myself feel the loss of our good friend, the good Lord Nelson. Permit me in the

morning to have the pleasure of seeing you, and hoping, my dear Lady Nelson, the continuance of your friendship, which will be in Sir William and myself for ever lasting to you and your family." Equally she tried to moderate Nelson's outbursts. Samuel Rogers in his *Table Talk* records that "I heard him once during dinner utter many bitter complaints (which Lady Hamilton vainly attempted to check) of the way he had been treated at Court that forenoon." She was still intent on making her way to Court, and realised that neither bitterness nor a breach with Lady Nelson were likely to help.

One other plan she tried, which is worth recording for the light it throws on her ambition and Nelson's complete lack of common sense when away from the sea. The plan may or may not have originated in her fertile brain, but it allured her none the less. Hamilton had a disreputable, but immensely wealthy cousin in William Beckford. This Beckford was anxious to become a peer, and offered Sir William an annuity of £2000 for life, £500 of which was to be continued to Emma on his death, if he could obtain a peerage with reversion to Beckford. Emma and Nelson urged the proposal, but Sir William hung back reluctant, knowing only too well that he would merely make himself ridiculous. Instead, he set to work, with Nelson's help, to draw up a memorial to the Treasury, asking to be indemnified for his losses and granted a pension. The losses, all told, he estimated at £23,000, assuming, wrongly as it turned out, that the cream of his collection of pictures and vases had been lost in the wreck of the *Colossus* on its way to England.

But if Sir William was reluctant to apply for a peerage, we may believe that his acceptance of an invitation to spend Christmas with Beckford was partly due to Emma's urgency. It was this visit, more than all else, which finally brought about the rupture between Nelson and his wife. Beckford was anxious to have Nelson beneath

his roof, and Nelson was only too willing to go in Emma's company. So on the 19th of December, after being at home with his wife less than six weeks, he set out for Fonthill with the Hamiltons, returning ten days later. Fanny had every right to feel hurt at his spending the first Christmas away from her; and he made matters no easier on his return by harping constantly on "dear Lady Hamilton."

The breaking point in Fanny's endurance came early in January 1801. Nelson's solicitor, William Haslewood, shall tell the tale. "In the winter of 1800/1801 I was breakfasting with Lord and Lady Nelson at their lodgings in Arlington Street, and a cheerful conversation was passing on indifferent subjects, when Lord Nelson spoke of something which had been done or said by 'dear Lady Hamilton'; upon which Lady Nelson rose from her chair, and exclaimed with much vehemence, 'I am sick of hearing of "dear Lady Hamilton," and am resolved that you shall give up either her or me.' Lord Nelson with perfect calmness said, 'Take care, Fanny, what you say. I love you sincerely; but I cannot forget my obligations to Lady Hamilton, or speak of her otherwise than with affection and admiration.' Without one soothing word or gesture, but muttering something about her mind being made up, Lady Nelson left the room, and shortly after drove from the house."

Emma had won Nelson and lost the Court—a Pyrrhic victory she did not particularly relish.

Little remains to be said of Fanny. Nelson embarked on the 13th of January for Copenhagen, and wrote to her from Southampton, "My dear Fanny, we are arrived and heartily tired; and with kindest regards to my father and all the family, believe me, your affectionate Nelson." It is clear that her "affectionate Nelson" had not yet realised the truth; he was quite unchanged where she was concerned, and a reconciliation would have been possible. It

was Emma who decided that the rupture should be final—for reasons which will appear in the next chapter—and Nelson obeyed her wishes.

Efforts at reconciliation were made by others, but without success. The last effort was made by Fanny herself.

Fanny to Nelson.

"16 Somerset St.,
"*December* 18*th*, 1801.

"My dear Husband,

"It is some time since I have written to you, the silence you have imposed is more than my affection will allow me and in this instance I hope you will forgive me in not obeying you. One thing I omitted in my letter of July which I now have to offer for your accommodation a comfortable warm House do My Dear Husband let us live together I can never be happy till such an event takes place. I assure you again I have but one wish in the world, to please you—let everything be buried in oblivion it will pass away like a dream. I can now only intreat you to believe I am most sincerely and affectionately your wife

"Frances N. Nelson."

To this letter Nelson made no reply.

Fanny's story is a tragedy, but it is hard to feel more than a perfunctory pity. She had never understood Nelson, never appreciated him, never helped him. When the trial came she could neither keep her man nor fight for him. Poor little middle-aged lady of the suburban soul!

CHAPTER XXIII

THE PANGS OF JEALOUSY

Emma's decision to crush Fanny was not merely the outcome of feminine fears. She was once more playing the "stateswoman," and thought there was a chance of wresting the course of politics to aid her social ambitions.

The January which saw the parting of Nelson and his wife saw also the beginning of the break between Pitt and the King. The former had just completed the Union between Great Britain and Ireland, and was intent on carrying out his promised Catholic emancipation. This the King, with his cast-iron Protestantism, would not endure. The result was Pitt's resignation on the 3rd of February and the formation of the Addington Ministry. The new Cabinet, though supported by Pitt, was admittedly weak, and, to add to the confusion, the King passed through another fit of lunacy lasting from the 22nd of February to the 6th of March. There was every prospect of a disruption of the Tory Party and the setting up of a Regency. It is significant of Emma's promptness and her trend of thought that Nelson's parting letter to his wife was written early in March. Had she possessed her soul in patience for a month or so, it would probably never have been written. For, impossible as it was, Emma's wish, Emma's nature, and all her actions hitherto, had aimed at keeping up appearances and treading the path of virtue. It sounds ridiculous, but only because human nature is not logical. Emma did not *feel* any passion for Nelson, and therefore she regarded the *liaison* merely as payment for glory received, not in any sense as vicious.

Nelson's rupture with his wife shattered her hopes for the moment, but the rupture might be healed; Emma certainly did not demand any irrevocable step, and Nelson left the door open.

But the political commotion put other ideas into Emma's head. The Court party had shown no sign of accepting her, nor any eagerness to act handsomely over Sir William's pension and losses. If she was to get anything out of them, it must be by laborious efforts. On the other hand she might reasonably expect a welcome in the Whig camp and, if they came into power, some share of the spoils. The Prince of Wales was, to put it mildly, a ladies' man, and had said that she "hit his fancy." What if he became Regent, and she played with his susceptibilities as she had done with so many Italian grandees? Further, the shifty Greville was once more at his old game of fishing in troubled waters. He was disappointed with the late Government, which had refused to turn Milford Haven into a naval port at the expense of the State; he was not sure of the Addington Ministry, and he wanted a friend in the Whig camp in case the Regency became a fact. Emma was the ideal tool, and he egged her on.

So Emma plunged again into politics, and again made a mess of things. But she acted decisively and at once. One of her first steps was to dismiss Fanny for ever. To send her packing would be a burning of her boats, and at the same time bind Nelson irrevocably to her side, whatever the outcome of her fresh schemes.

Although the plan was simple, Emma had a difficult part to play. What political party she espoused was a small matter, but to captivate the Prince was ticklish work, both because of Nelson's jealousies and because she had no intention of going beyond a certain point. Further, there was the fact that her child was due towards the end of January and must be born beneath Sir William's roof, unknown to any but Emma and her mother. In the

meantime she had to carry herself bravely before the world, entertaining and being entertained. At Fonthill, amid the Christmas festivities, she had been forced to give her Attitudes; in London she had to appear at dinner parties and at the theatre—the cynosure of every eye.

From the 13th of January to the 12th of March Nelson was at various ports preparing for his expedition to the Baltic. Before setting out he had arranged with Emma that they should correspond about the coming child under the name of Thomson, the father being supposedly in Nelson's ship, while the mother was under Emma's protection. How Emma conducted her part of the mystification we cannot tell because Nelson destroyed all her letters, but probably she did it well, as a mere extension of her Attitudes. Nelson made a wonderful hash of it, mystifying later readers completely by his more or less indifferent use of "Thomson" and "myself." It is from Nelson's jumbled replies that the facts have to be pieced together.

Perhaps it was only to be expected that Emma should be far more successful in dealing with the Fanny problem than with the Prince of Wales scheme. Yet, if she had possessed a little more of the artifice so commonly attributed to her, she would have managed both equally well. The weapon she employed in the case of Fanny was jealousy—simulated, so far as she was concerned, but quite effective. In the case of the Prince, she pretended that a disagreeable necessity was being thrust upon her, with the result that she nearly drove Nelson mad, and the whole scheme miscarried. The two dramas are interwoven and must be unfolded side by side.

Emma soon learnt that Fanny had gone to Brighton, and passed the news on to Nelson, apparently suggesting that she had gone to the south coast in the hopes of meeting her husband. "Let her go to Briton" (*sic*), Nelson replied, "or where she pleases, I care not; she is a great fool and thank God, you are not in the least bit like her."

So far so good. Emma next threw out a hint that the Prince might dine at her house, and put the blame skilfully on to Sir William. Nelson took the news calmly, though he was a little indignant.

At this point all schemes had to be dropped temporarily to meet the crisis of Horatia's birth. Emma retired to her room with indigestion, a plea that satisfied Sir William, and on the 29th of January or thereabouts was delivered of a daughter. Not a soul but Mrs Cadogan was the wiser, although the infant remained under Sir William's roof for a week. Whoever was responsible for the details had a genius for secret organisation of the highest order.

Nelson was jubilant. On the 1st of February he wrote, "I believe poor dear Mrs Thomson's friend will go mad with joy. He cries, prays, and performs all tricks, yet dare not show all or any of his feelings, but he has only me to consult with. He swears he will drink your health this day in a bumper, and damn me if I don't join him in spite of all the doctors in Europe. . . . I cannot write, I am so agitated by the young man at my elbow. I believe he is foolish, he does nothing but rave about you and her. I own I participate of his joy and cannot write anything."

The joy which Nelson took in Horatia was touching in the extreme, and makes one feel that he would never have deserted Fanny had she given him children. "I love," he was to write later, "I never did love any one else. I never had a dear pledge of love till you gave me one, and you, thank my God, never gave one to anybody else." As soon as the first paroxysms of joy were over, he turned his attention to making provision for the child, declaring that, "I would steal white bread sooner than my godchild should want."

But by this time Emma was sufficiently recovered to be scheming again, and once more wrote about the Prince's

visit. This time she was obviously more emphatic, for Nelson became worried: "Sir William," he told her, "should say to the Prince that, situated as you are, it would be highly improper for you to admit H.R.H. That the Prince should wish it, I am not surprized at, and that he will attempt every means to get into your house and into any place where you may dine. Sir William should speak out, and if the Prince is a man of honour he will quit the pursuit of you. I know his aim is to have you for a mistress. The thought so agitates me that I cannot write." But left to himself, Nelson soon calmed down again, taking the rational view that Emma could and would behave with propriety. His next letters are full of details about Horatia's christening, and even quaint jokes: "Its name will be Horatia, daughter of Johem and Morata Etnorb. If you read the surname backwards and take the letters of the other names, it will make, very extraordinary, the names of your real and affectionate friends, Lady Hamilton and myself." He hopes that the nurse will be given an additional guinea, and talks of a small pension to Mrs Cadogan if she keeps the secret well. All is peace and content, and a certain sly enjoyment in the news which Davison brought him that "you are grown thinner, but he thinks you look handsomer than ever."

Into this peaceful Paradise there entered a serpent of Emma's contriving. "I have a letter from Sir William," wrote Nelson, "he speaks of the Regency as certain, and then probably he thinks you will sell better—horrid thought." The horrid thought was clearly the result, not of Sir William's letter, but of Emma's insinuations. In part, of course, it was a fact; Emma meant to get something out of the intrigues, though she had no intention of selling herself.

Instead of soothing Nelson's suspicions or flaming with indignation—the two obvious alternatives had she been innocent of all intrigue—Emma turned on Nelson, accus-

ing him of flirting. His defence of himself was complete enough, but not content with declaring his fidelity, he made up his mind never to leave his ship, and so spent his time miserably cooped up in a draughty cabin and brooding over his fears. "Suppose I did say," he wrote, "that the west-country women wore black stockings, what is it more than if you was to say what puppies all the present young men are? You cannot help your eyes, and God knows I cannot see much. . . . I am glad you have found out Mrs Kelly is so handsome; in that case you will give me credit for never going to make her a visit. . . . Respecting Kingsmill's friend, I declare solemnly that I know not if it is man or woman." Against the Prince and his companions he exhausted all the abuse at his command. There is a grim irony in the thought of Nelson, the seducer, contrasting his own innocence and constancy with the Prince's villainous character, and a sort of poetic justice in the pangs of jealousy which he felt.

The storm over, Nelson showed his innate confidence in Emma by some of the most charming and lovable of his letters. Emma entirely misconceived the position, thinking that she might once more broach the subject of the Prince. The effect on Nelson was instantaneous. Her letter stirred him into something not unlike madness, which lasted several days. As the hours passed he grew more and more frenzied, until at last there was a touch almost of Lear's ravings in his incoherence: "All your pictures are before me. What will Mrs Denis say, and what will she sing—Be calm, be Gentle, the Wind has changed? Do you go to the opera tonight? They tell me he sings well. I have eat nothing but a little rice and drank water; but forgive me, I know my Emma, and don't forget that you had once a Nelson, a friend, a dear friend, but alas! he has his misfortunes. He has lost the best, his only friend, his only love. Don't forget him, poor fellow; he is honest. Oh, I could thunder and

strike dead with my lightning. I dreamt it last night, my Emma. I am calmer; reason, I hope, will resume her place, please God. Tears have relieved me." The thought of the Prince made him desperate as well as mad, and he definitely threatened to drop Emma if she had anything to do with him.

Emma had to give up her scheme, and was no doubt aided in her decision by the recovery of the King and the disappearance of the Regency. The ease with which she dropped it is sufficient proof of how completely she was mistress of the situation, and how clearly the crisis was of her own contriving. "You have shown," Nelson wrote gratefully, "that you are above all temptation, and not to be drawn into the paths of dishonour for to gratify any pride or to gain any riches." Sir William was made to bear the blame, and Nelson gladly leapt at the excuse. "Sir William," he said severely, "ought to know that his views *are dishonourable*."

The game was up and Emma knew it, though she made a few more tentative hints, to which Nelson replied firmly but calmly. But while one side of her scheme had failed, she pressed forward the other; Fanny was not to come back. Nelson replied on the 22nd February: "After the letter I wrote *her* the other day I do not think she will attempt to either come here or go to London. I will do as you please; but I do not believe she will venture without my orders; but *all* as you please." What she pleased can be seen in Nelson's final letter to Fanny of the 4th of March, "Living I have done all in my power for you, and if dead, you will find I have done the same. Therefore my only wish is to be left to myself."

Meanwhile Nelson was hatching a plan of his own, which was to retire with Emma to Bronte. What was not clear to him was whether to go at once or to wait for Sir William's death. In the latter event he would also try to secure a divorce from Fanny, and take Emma away

as his wife. The problem was complicated by the war. Nelson could dally with the idea of giving up the Service, but so long as his country needed him he could not take the fatal step, and therefore leaned towards a postponement until Sir William was out of the way. But this did not prevent him from dwelling upon his future hopes. "You cannot think," he wrote, "how I long for our little innocent plan to be put in execution"; and again, "you ought to know that I have a head to plan and a heart to execute whenever it is right and the time arrives." That he should have formed the plan is not surprising, but that he should use the epithets innocent and right is curious proof of the warping power of passion on a man essentially clear-minded and naturally religious.

This part of Nelson's and Emma's life can be fittingly closed by quoting a letter which is famous enough but has never been given in full. It is an extraordinary letter, combining as it does the highest and lowest sentiments, the purest affection and the grossest sensuality. It is typical of the conflict in Nelson's mind—his religion and his passion, his idealism and his very clear perception of facts.

Nelson to Emma.

"*March 1st*, 1801. 9 *o'clock.*

"Now, my own dear wife, for such you are in my eyes and in the face of heaven, I can give full scope to my feelings, for I daresay Oliver will faithfully deliver this letter. You know, my dearest Emma, that there is nothing in this world that I would not do for us to live together, and to have our dear little child with us. I firmly believe that this campaign will give us peace, and then we will sett off for Bronte. In twelve hours we shall be across the water and freed from all the nonsense of his friends, or rather pretended ones. Nothing but an event happening to him could prevent my going, and I am sure you will think

so, for unless all matters accord it would bring 100 of tongues and slanderous reports if I separated from her (which I would do with pleasure the moment we can be united; I want to see her no more), therefore we must manage till we can quit this country or your uncle dies. I love, I never did love anyone else. I never had a dear pledge of love till you gave me one, and you, thank my God, never gave one to anybody else. I think before March is out you will either see us back, or so victorious that we shall insure a glorious issue to our toils. Think what my Emma will feel at seeing return safe, perhaps with a little more fame, her own dear loving Nelson. Never, if I can help it, will I dine out of my ship, or go on shore, except duty calls me. Let Sir Hyde have any glory he can catch—I envy him not. You, my beloved Emma, and my country, are the two dearest objects of my fond heart—*a heart susceptible and true.* Only place confidence in me and you never shall be disappointed. I burn all your dear letters, because it is right for your sake, and I wish you would burn all mine—they can do no good, and will do us both harm if any seizure of them or the dropping even of one of them, would fill the mouths of the world sooner than we intend. My longing for you, both person and conversation, you may readily imagine. What must be my sensations at the idea of sleeping with you![1] . . . I am sure my love and desires are all to you.[1] . . . No, my heart, person and mind is in perfect union of love towards my own dear, beloved Emma—the *real bosom* friend of her, all hers, all Emma's, etc.

"Oliver is gone to sleep, he is grown half foolish. I shall give him £10 in the morning, and I have wrote a letter recommending a friend of his to the Chairman of the East India Company, which he said you would be glad I should do for him. I have nothing to send my Emma, it makes me sorry you and Sir Wm. could not come to

[1] A couple of sentences are omitted.

Yarmouth, that would be pleasant, but we shall not be there more than a week at farthest. I had a letter this day from the Rev. Mr Holden, who we met on the Continent; he desired his kind compliments to you and Sir William: he sent me the letters of my name, and recommended it as my motto—Honor est a Nilo—Horatio Nelson. May the Heavens bless you. My love, my darling angel, my heaven-given wife, the dearest only true wife of her own till death etc. I know you will never let that fellow or any one else come near you.

"Monday morning. Oliver is just going on shore; the time will ere long arrive when Nelson will land to fly to his Emma, to be for ever with her. Let that hope keep us up under our present difficulties. Kiss and bless *our* dear Horatia—think of that."

CHAPTER XXIV

"PARADISE" MERTON

(1)

AMONG other cares which Emma had in this January of 1801 was the work of getting into a new house, No. 23 Piccadilly. Hitherto she and Sir William had lived in apartments, and the taking of a house brought them face to face with the problem of furniture. Sir William had no money to spare, owing to Greville's manœuvres in Wales and the expenses of Palermo. Indeed, he was not only pressing the Treasury for a pension, but also contemplating the sale of his remaining pictures and vases. Emma was only too anxious that his attention should be distracted from herself, and she accordingly gave him her jewels to sell, out of the proceeds of which the furniture was to be bought. Sir William carried out the commission, and then busied himself with drawing up a deed making over the plate and furniture to Emma.

What with these occupations and his complete confidence in both Emma and Nelson, Sir William had no suspicions of his wife's indisposition. He wrote quite happily to Nelson three weeks after Horatia's birth that "all her convulsive complaints certainly proceed from a foul stomach," and further informed him that "she is much better—having vomited naturally, and is now purposing to take a regular one of tartar emetic."

Almost more amazing than Sir William's diagnosis was Emma's physical strength. Within a week of her confinement she took the child by night in a hackney coach to a certain Mrs Gibson in Little Titchfield Street, which

was to be Horatia's home for some years. Yet the strain must have told upon her. In spite of the tartar emetic she was still poorly when Nelson came to London for three days' leave on the 24th of February to see his child for the first time.

As Emma grew stronger she reverted to her political plans, and even dabbled again with the idea of capturing the Prince. "Your letters today," Nelson wrote irritably, "have made me miserable; there is a turn in them that I have noticed; it almost appeared that you liked to dwell on the theme that that fellow wished, and what he would give, to enjoy your person." No doubt she did, for having turned towards the Prince's set, she was finding a warm welcome, and Emma had long since begun to hanker after the fleshpots of Egypt.

The set in which she found herself was not only notorious, but extravagant, and Emma, with her genius for display, was living up to her surroundings. The blame she put, quite unjustifiably, on Sir William's shoulders, and Nelson, who should have known better, accepted her word. "What," he demanded angrily, "can Sir William mean by wanting you to launch out into expense and extravagance? He that used to think that a little candlelight and iced water would ruin him to want to set off at £10,000 a year, for a less sum would not afford concerts and the style of living equal to it. Suppose you had set off in this way, what would he not have said? But you are at auction, or rather to be sold by private contract. Good God! my blood boils; to you that everything used *to be refused*. I cannot bear it. Aye, how different I feel. A cottage, a plain joint of meat, and happiness, doing good to the poor, and setting an example of virtue and godliness, worthy of imitation even to kings and princes."

Before sailing Nelson began busying himself again with his will, and wrote very tenderly to Emma about it. "I

assure you, it gave me pleasure instead of pain, the reflection that I was providing for a dear friend. . . . You must not think, my dearest friend, that this necessary act hastens our departure, but it is a right and proper measure. Why should my friends be neglected, and those who I care nothing for have my little fortune, which I have worked so hard and I think so honourably for ?"

A comparison of Nelson's natural tenderness with Emma's heartless response reminds one of the casting of pearls before swine. To all this overflowing devotion Emma replied with a suspicious cross-examination about Fanny. What was all this talk of Fanny taking a house ? Was Nelson implicated ? Was he going back to her ? Nelson answered through the mythical Mrs Thomson : "He desires me to say he has never wrote his aunt [*i.e.* Fanny] since he sailed, and all this parade about a house is nonsense. He has wrote to his father, but not a word or message to her. He does not, nor cannot, care about her ; he believes she has a most unfeeling heart." It was in the midst of such botherations and pinpricks that on the 2nd of April Nelson won the Battle of Copenhagen. His thoughts at once turned towards England and Emma.

What Emma did we know from a first-hand account. The news reached London on the 15th of April. That evening Emma was entertaining the usual set in the usual style. The Dukes of Gordon and Queensberry were in her drawing-room, Lord William Gordon, Greville, a Neapolitan Duke, and a few others, mostly men. At ten o'clock Wraxall, the historian, looked in, and has thus recorded the scene. "Lady Hamilton, inspired by the recent success of Lord Nelson . . . after playing on the harpsichord, and accompanying it with her voice, undertook to dance the 'Tarentella.' Sir William began it with her, and maintained the conflict, for such it might well be esteemed, for some minutes. When unable longer to

continue it, the Duke de Noia succeeded to his place; but he, too, though near forty years younger than Sir William, soon gave in. Lady Hamilton then sent for her own maid servant; who being likewise exhausted, after a short time, another female attendant, a Copt, perfectly black, whom Lord Nelson had presented her, on his return from Egypt, relieved her companion. It would be difficult to convey any adequate idea of this dance; but the Fandango and Seguedilla of the Spaniards present an image of it. We must recollect that the two performers are supposed to be a Satyr and a Nymph; or rather, a Fawn and a Bacchant. It was certainly not of a nature to be performed, except before a select company; as the screams, attitudes, starts and embraces with which it was intermingled, gave it a peculiar character." To Sir William she presented a different picture. "You would have laughed," he wrote to Nelson the next day, "to have seen what I saw yesterday. Emma did not know whether she was on her head or heels—in such a hurry to tell your great news that she could utter nothing but tears of joy and tenderness." Her tenderness was not particularly evident to Wraxall, nor yet apparently in her letter of congratulation to Nelson. "All your letters, my dearest, best friend," he replied, "to the 17th came safe on the eve of your natal day. You will readily conceive the pleasure they must have given me to know you, my dear amiable, still take an interest in my glory. I transfer it all to my guardian angel Santa Emma." Both took his words as literally true. Emma really believed that he had transferred his glory, and rejoiced accordingly. It was the only thing about Nelson she cared for.

(2)

As soon after the Battle of Copenhagen as he could, Nelson hurried back to Emma, landing at Yarmouth on

the 1st of July. The whole party then went to Staines on a holiday. But it was cut short. A fresh danger was threatening England, and though it was more apparent than real, Nelson was needed to calm the feeling of panic which was rising. England was once more Napoleon's sole antagonist, and that restless and ambitious soul, well knowing that universal empire could never be his till England was crushed, spread abroad rumours of invasion. A real invasion was now far less possible than before, since, thanks to Nelson, England was mistress of the seas. But the country could not be expected to know this, and as Napoleon was more than ever a name of dread, public opinion demanded that the popular hero should be entrusted with the task of defending the coast. Nelson hoisted his flag at Sheerness on the 27th of July.

Nevertheless, short as the holiday had been, it was long enough to enable Nelson to reach an important decision. He was still hankering after his "innocent plan" of taking Emma to Bronte, but, for reasons which will appear later, Emma's influence was thrown in the opposite scale, and before the few short weeks were over she had so far pressed her view that he had decided to buy a house in England. His appointment left him no time for arrangements, and the business was therefore entrusted to Emma.

She lost no time, because she did not want Nelson to change his mind, and as Sir William left for Wales almost at the same moment that Nelson left for Sheerness, she had plenty of opportunity. It was no doubt because she was occupied and had got her own way that her letters to Nelson were comparatively kind. She searched at Turnham Green, at Chiswick, at Merton, sending Nelson full details. Not that they mattered; Nelson was indifferent so long as she was pleased, for after all, it was her plan. "Buy the house at Turnham Green," he wrote when reconnoitring off Boulogne; and later on, "I approve of the house at Merton"—although he had seen

neither. Merton was discovered before Sir William returned from Wales, and the purchase completed before the end of September.

On Sir William's return Nelson persuaded him to bring Emma down to Deal for a fortnight, and in preparation for her visit, asked her to "send to some good wine merchant for three dozen of the best champagne and order to the Downs by waggon, directed on board the Amazon, or I shall have nothing to give you"—a small detail, but confirmation of a fact in Emma's new style of life not to be denied. She had become over-fond of drink.

On returning from Deal Emma set to work in good earnest to prepare Merton against Nelson's arrival. She was given complete discretion, as was reasonable enough seeing that the whole party was to live there. But it was agreed that the place was to contain nothing belonging to Sir William. The reason was obvious. Nelson proposed to lend Merton to Emma in case of need, and if it was entirely his own "no person can molest you." But this arrangement, to which Emma raised no objection, had a drawback; it meant that the house in Piccadilly had to be maintained, so that Sir William found living at Merton no economy, but rather an added expense.

So far as Nelson was personally concerned, his trust in Emma was touching. Not only did he approve blindly all she did or suggested, but assured her that "you will make us rich with your economy." Emma, by way of playing up to him, said she was paying off her debts, and Nelson, nothing doubting, praised her: "You are right, my dear Emma, to pay your debts—to be in debt is to be in misery." She was to discover the truth of his words.

Peace with France put an end to Nelson's command. Shortly before he was released Emma and her husband had taken up their residence at Merton, and when Nelson

arrived on the 22nd of October, he found it all he desired. There was only one hesitation at the back of his mind. For all that he had fallen in with Emma's views, he was still yearning for the time when she and he would fly the country. If and when that time came, what was to be done with Merton? It perplexed him. "Do you think," he wrote early in October, "we shall soon get to Bronte? I should be very happy, but I must first settle all my affairs in this country, and Merton may become a deadweight on our hands."

(3)

Emma spoke of their new home as "Paradise" Merton. Yet there was a serpent in the garden, and it took the form of a poor old doddering man—Sir William. At Naples, and while his conscience was still clear, Nelson had found Sir William excellent company. In June 1799 he had written quite sincerely to St Vincent, "Good Sir William will make you laugh with his wit and inexhaustible pleasantry." But what Nelson found pleasant so long as his honour was bright, took on a different complexion when he knew himself to have wronged the old man. Not immediately, because in Nelson's scheme Sir William was to be paired off with Fanny. It was when Fanny had broken with Nelson and Emma with the Court party that new plans began to be formulated in which Sir William had no share. Yet if he was not to partake, he could and did hinder; and precisely as his presence proved a bar to Nelson's desires, his charm evaporated; the *tria juncta in uno* no longer had a place in Nelson's mind. Disparaging remarks can be found in plenty throughout his letters of 1801. The ease with which he believed Sir William capable of selling Emma to the Prince and his fury at it have been recorded, as well as the way in which he swallowed Emma's story that Sir William was forcing her into

extravagance. While still indignant over the thought, he referred to another flaw. "You know," he wrote to Emma, "I would not in Sir William's case have gone to Court without my wife, and such a wife, never to be matched." A little later he wanted Emma to visit him at Yarmouth, and found it possible that Sir William might come alone if the invitation were sent. "It might grieve me," said the unhappy Nelson, "to see Sir William without you, but if you approve, I will ask." In the Thomson letters, where under feigned names he could be more downright, he referred with evident longing to the time when the "uncle" should be dead.

The irony of it was that Nelson did not dislike Sir William in himself. It was only Emma's husband that got upon his nerves—perhaps almost worse, upon his conscience. To see him was to remember the wrong he had done him, and he had to see him continually. In spite of his genuine liking for Sir William, he must have found it hard to remain on good terms, and the old man's pleasure in Nelson's friendship is proof not only of his own affectionate nature, but also of the pains that Nelson took to hide his true feelings.

It is easy to understand why Nelson longed for the flight to Bronte, and why he felt so much irritated with the fresh commands—in the Baltic and the Channel—which might bring him honour but inevitably frustrated his plans. Now, with the peace of Amiens, his opportunity seemed to have come. What prevented him from taking it? The stumbling-block seems to have been Emma, and though there is no definite evidence of her feelings, they may be conjectured with a degree of certainty.

Her motives were no doubt mixed. Love for Sir William played no part; she had never felt more for him than affection and gratitude, and even this had largely waned. But Sir William did represent something that Emma valued, and that was respectability. Emma clung

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to it almost instinctively. And rightly. She had experienced free love before; she could remember still the bitterness of despair when Fetherstonehaugh threw her off, when Greville disposed of her. What was to prevent Nelson tiring of her, and with curt decisiveness dismissing her as he had done Fanny? She was not going to run the risk. Besides, what had she to gain? In her eyes Nelson was not a lover, but a purveyor of glory. She had no ambition for "a cottage, a plain joint of meat"; it would give her no pleasure to be cooped up in Bronte with a one-armed, toothless invalid, unsung, unacclaimed. She wanted fame and money, the whirl of excitement and gaiety; given that, romance might look after itself. Apart from all questions of insecurity, she had two motives for avoiding flight: the certainty that Nelson's fame would be diminished, and the desire to have whatever Sir William might leave her in his will. Emma was not above snapping up unconsidered trifles, especially seeing that Sir William's end could not be long delayed, and when it came, might pave the way for marriage with Nelson. As his wife, she would still be able to live in England. For every reason, therefore, the flight to Bronte would be a mistake for her.

Meanwhile the question of what Sir William would leave her began to be of increasing importance. If Emma's deterioration had done nothing else, it had at least freed her from mistaken loyalty to Greville, and she now made a very deliberate attempt to oust him from Sir William's will.

Greville had come into the picture again in a cloud of hypocrisy. Directly he could get to work on his uncle, he dragged him down to Wales and managed to impress him with the golden prospects. "I am delighted," Sir William confided to Nelson, "with the improvements at Milford. It will surely be a great town, if we have peace, in three years." However, on reconsideration, prosperity three years after peace was declared seemed rather remote

to a man of seventy-one in feeble health, and when, therefore, in September Greville made further proposals, Sir William wrote rather crossly that "as to making any purchase of land at present, it is far from my thoughts. . . . As to the business of the dock and your lawsuit and Mr Jacob's bankruptcy and my giving instructions to Mr Buck, I am in total ignorance and therefore do not choose to meddle. . . . When you say it will not require less than 10 or 12,000 to compleat the works, I am frightened. You must get out of the scrape as well as you can." By December he was still more anxious. "When," he asks, "was Davis to remit the rents due at Michaelmas to Messrs Coutts? Nothing has yet arrived and I am living upon one of the £1000 stock sold out, and I find nothing is to be got out of the Treasury; for this reason also I am anxious to finish the business with Foley that I may not be distressed in looking for money to pay the current expenses of our house. . . . It is cruel to find myself in the situation I am at present."

The cause of his difficulties was partly Greville's excellent method of spending his uncle's present income for his own future benefit; partly Sir William's failure to wring money out of the Treasury. But almost more it was the rate at which he was living—the extravagance which Emma had laid at his door, but which was really her own doing. The poor old man hardly knew how the expenses arose, and certainly did not like it. "I see," he wrote plaintively, "as fast as I get money in my banker's hands, the housekeeping draughts draw it off. I have a bill for wine only, since we came home, of near £400."

Emma was enjoying herself in the only way she now knew—by ostentation and lavish expenditure. She began to feel the need of money, and she recalled the fact that Greville was Sir William's heir. Hitherto she had scrupulously kept her promise to "keep of all that's against

your interest"; but now that Sir William was nearing the end, and her own views had entirely changed, she thought otherwise. It was her own idea; Nelson was, if anything, opposed. "What signifies the dirty acres to you?" he had written, and it was in keeping with his character. But Emma knew that Sir William had made his will in May 1801, and very probably she knew the terms. She had debts and she needed money to pay them; she had lavish ideas and she wanted an income to gratify them. Therefore she set to work to undermine Sir William's affection for Greville.

Her efforts had a surprising result. Sir William was already growing tired of the continual round of gaiety; he wanted quiet and repose; he wanted to live peacably within his income. Relations with Emma were growing a little strained in "Paradise" Merton, and were made no easier by this last attack upon his plans and settled intentions. He would have none of it and, rather than give in, would agree to all Greville's proposals. In January 1802 he wrote to Greville, "I return you, my dear Charles, the enclosed paper, with the additions you wished for. My partiality to you, and the thorough confidence I have in you, in spite of any attempts that have been made to disturb them, remains, and will I am confident, to my last moment in full force. My visit to Milford last year convinced me of the propriety of all your operations there, which may still operate in my favour during the short time I can expect to live, but must be attended with immense profit to my heirs hereafter. . . . Nothing at present disturbs me but my debt and the nonsense I am obliged to submit to here to avoid coming to an explosion, which wou'd be attended with many disagreeable effects, and would totally destroy the comfort of the best man and the best friend I have in the world. However, I am determined that my quiet shall not be disturbed, let the nonsensicall world go on as it will."

It was probably about this time that Sir William sent the following remonstrance to Emma, a document which is dignified enough in itself, but very pathetic in the evidence it gives that Sir William had no other means of making Emma attend to his wishes.

Sir William Hamilton to Emma.

No date.

"I have passed the last 40 years of my life in the hurry and bustle that must necessarily be attendant on a public character. I am arrived at the age when some repose is really necessary, and I promised myself a quiet home, and altho' I was sensible, and said so when I married, that I shou'd be superannuated when my wife wou'd be in her full beauty and vigour of youth. That time is arrived, and we must make the best of it for the comfort of both parties. Unfortunately our tastes as to the manner of living are very different. I by no means wish to live in solitary retreat, but to have seldom less than 12 or 14 at table, and those varying continually, is coming back to what was become so irksome to me in Italy during the latter years of my residence in that country. I have no connections out of my own family. I have no complaint to make, but I feel that the whole attention of my wife is given to Ld. N. and his interest at Merton. I well know the purity of Ld. N's friendship for Emma and me, and I know how very uncomfortable it wou'd make his Lp, our best friend, if a separation shou'd take place, and am therefore determined to do all in my power to prevent such an extremity, which wou'd be *essentially detrimental* to all parties, but wou'd be more sensibly felt by our dear friend than by us. Provided that our expences in housekeeping do not encrease beyond measure (of which I must own I see some danger), I am willing to go on upon our present footing; but as I cannot expect to live many years, every

moment to me is precious, and I hope I may be allow'd sometimes to be my own master, and pass my time according to my own inclination, either by going my fishing parties on the Thames or by going to London to attend the Museum, R. Society, the Tuesday Club, and Auctions of pictures. I mean to have a light chariot or postchaise by the month, that I may make use of it in London and run backwards and forwards to Merton or to Shepperton etc. This is my plan, and we might go on very well, but I am fully determined not to have more of the very silly altercations that happen but too often between us and embitter the present moments exceedingly. If realy one cannot live comfortably together, a *wise* and well *concerted separation* is preferable; but I think, considering the probability of my not troubling any party long in this world, the best for us all wou'd be to bear those ills we have rather than flie to those we know not of. I have fairly stated what I have on my mind. There is no time for nonsense or trifling. I know and admire your talents and many excellent qualities; but I am not blind to your defects, and confess having many myself; therefore let us bear and forbear for God's sake."

Emma took the hint and patched up the quarrel. She soothed the old man down, and having failed to creep any further into his will, revived Beckford's peerage scheme, which at least assured her of an annuity of £500 a year. Sir William, either to meet her half-way, or because he was overborne, took a few half-hearted steps in the middle of the year. Beckford was quite ready to renew his offer; Nelson and Emma took up the matter warmly, though their efforts were more likely to do harm than good. Sir William, rather shamefacedly, wrote to his relation the Marquis of Douglas. "You know me," he remarked, "and can well imagine that a Peerage would not flatter my vanity. . . . Lord Nelson wished me to acquaint

you yesterday with the message from Fonthill, and so I do, but beg of you only to turn it in your mind, and I assure you that I shall not be offended if I get no answer to this letter."

The scheme, one need hardly add, came to nothing.

(4)

In July Sir William had arranged to go down to Milford with Greville, and as Emma went, so of course did Nelson. The party was swelled by others of Nelson's relations, and the tour was turned into a triumphal progress after the fashion of the journey across Europe two years before. The cavalcade passed from London to Box Hill, and thence to Oxford. Here a rebuff awaited them. They visited Blenheim, where the Duke of Marlborough sent them refreshments but refused to see them himself. Emma was driven to her usual extravagance: "Nelson," she said on leaving, "shall have a monument to which Blenheim shall be but a pig-sty." From Oxford they went to Gloucester, Monmouth, Milford, Swansea and Cardiff, and then began the return journey. Everywhere bells were rung, speeches made, and addresses presented, while crowds lined all the roads. It seemed very triumphant and grand. "Our tour," Nelson wrote, "has been very fine and interesting, and the way in which I have been everywhere received most flattering to my feelings; and although some of the higher powers may wish to keep me down, yet the reward of the general approbation and gratitude for my services is an ample reward for all I have done; but it makes a *comparison* fly up to my mind, not much to the credit of some in the higher offices of the State."

Emma was exultant. "We have had a most charming tour which will Burst *some* of THEM. So let all the enemies of the GREATEST man alive [perish]. And bless his friends."

Yet the tour had another aspect, and perhaps a truer

one. A certain Mr Gore, of Tenby, saw them in the midst of their triumphs, and this was how he described it: "I was yesterday witness to an exhibition which, though greatly ridiculous, was not wholly so, for it was likewise pitiable, and this was in the persons of two individuals who have lately occupied much public attention. I mean the Duke of Bronte, Lord Nelson, and Emma, Lady Hamilton. The whole town was at their heels as they walked together. The lady is grown immensely fat, and equally coarse, while her 'companion in arms' has taken to the other extreme—thin, shrunken, and to my impression in bad health. They were evidently vain of each other, as though the one would have said, 'This is Horatio of the Nile,' and the other, 'This is the Emma of Sir William.' Poor Sir William, wretched but not abashed, he followed at a short distance, bearing in his arms a cucciolo (a little dog), and other emblems of combined folly."

It was upon this tour, and perhaps not far from Tenby itself, that the wretched Sir William was the victim of another piece of petulant "nonsense." Emma left a note for him: "As I see it is a pain to you to remain here, let me beg of you to fix your time for going. Weather I dye in Piccadilly or any other spot in England, 'tis the same to me; but I remember the time when you wish'd for tranquility, but now all visiting and bustle is your liking. However, I will do what you please, being ever your affectionate and obedient E. H."

Sir William, who might have retorted much more fiercely, wrote on the back: "I neither love bustle nor great company, but I like some employment and diversion. I have but a very short time to live, and every moment is precious to me. I am in no hurry, and am exceedingly glad to give every satisfaction to our best friend, our dear Lord Nelson. The question, then, is what we can best do that all may be perfectly satisfied. Sea bathing is usefull to your health;

I see it is, and wish you to continue it a little longer ; but I must confess that I regret, whilst the season is favourable, that I cannot enjoy my favourite amusement of quiet fishing. I care not a pin for the great world, and am attached to no one so much as to you."

CHAPTER XXV

EXIT SIR WILLIAM

(1)

Sir William was right in thinking that he had but a very short time to live. But his last few months outweighed in value to England the whole of his other seventy-two years.

From Nelson's point of view there were three obstacles between him and the full enjoyment of Emma—Fanny, Sir William and the war. He had dismissed Fanny so far as he could; the war had ceased for the time being. Had Sir William been dead, Nelson would undoubtedly have urged his "innocent plan" with all the vigour at his command. He wanted Emma to himself with a passionate fervour that few men experience; he chafed not merely at the restrictions imposed by the situation, but almost more at the lies it involved, the living deception which was so foreign to his nature and so contrary to his religion; better by far the open sin which he had persuaded himself was justified, than the network of intrigue, the daily sight of the wronged friend, the insults to Emma which he had no power to resent. Moreover he felt keenly the undercurrent of censure, which was all the more bitter because it chimed in with the voice of a conscience he could not wholly silence. And last, and perhaps least, he found the present mode of living too expensive—almost beyond his means and certainly harassing to his independence. He had already been compelled to ask for a larger pension—only to be refused.

Even during the war he had urged his views. When peace was signed in March 1802 he would have redoubled

his efforts, and if Sir William had not been there, Emma might have been forced to agree. And the consequences ? If they had gone to Sicily, would Nelson have offered his services when war broke out again ? Would they have been accepted if he had ? But for the last few months of Sir William's life, Trafalgar might never have been fought.

His gentle disposition was almost as important as his life. The separation, at which he hinted, might have been sufficient to drive Emma into Nelson's arms and force them abroad. It was a matter of touch and go ; for the strained relations continued, while Sir William's patience was wearing thin. In December 1802 Emma's extravagance drove her into money difficulties which she feared to admit directly. Instead she left a letter from her bank for Sir William to find. It was brief and to the point : " We have the honour to acquaint you that the present balance of your money in our hands is twelve shillings and eleven pence."

Sir William was not in the mood to be jockeyed. He had promised to pay her debts up to £700, and if he gave her an advance now, it was to be deducted from that sum. She had already received £120, and he now gave her £130, leaving £450 to come. The sad part from Emma's point of view was that the debts had not been reduced. There was therefore plenty of scope for further trouble.

But by this time the crisis had almost passed. Napoleon had never meant the Peace of Amiens to be more than a breathing space. Almost from the first the crazy pretence had broken down, and as 1802 drew to a close the renewal of war became something more than the conjecture of pessimists. Nelson, as a member of the House of Lords and a friend of the Premier, well knew the trembling of the balance : in the early days of 1803 he was discussing the prospect of being once more in the Mediterranean ; in March he wrote to the Prime Minister : " Whenever

it is necessary, I am *your* Admiral." With that letter the die was cast; Sir William had all unconsciously fulfilled his task, and now, the need gone, his unhappy soul was released. He died on the 6th of April 1803. Emma, flamboyant in grief as in joy, expressed her feelings on paper: "April 6th—Unhappy day for the forlorn Emma. Ten minutes past ten dear blessed Sir William left me." His will was read a month later, in which Emma was left a sum of £300, an annuity of £800 (including £100 for Mrs Cadogan), and the balance of the £700 promised to pay off her debts. The residue was left to Greville. Sir William's brother, a parson, wrote to Greville: "I hope you will give me credit when I assure you that I am happy in the destination my brother has made of his property; my satisfaction wou'd have been more complete if it wou'd have permitted him to have added something to Lady Hamilton's provision." That, generally speaking, was the common view, but Greville took no notice of it.

The other point of interest in the will was the reference to Nelson. "The copy of Madam Le Brun's picture of Emma, in enamel, by Bone, I give to my dearest friend Lord Nelson, Duke of Bronte, a very small token of the great regard I have for his Lordship, the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character I ever met with. God bless him, and shame fall on those who do not say amen."

That death-bed scene was strange indeed—Emma and Nelson, the erring wife and the guilty friend, beside the dying man. At the moment no doubt the solemnity of death touched the two survivors, but Nelson must in his heart have been glad that another barrier had been broken down. Death was no stranger to this hero of a hundred battles, and whatever passing grief there may have been, whatever hint of remorse, it must soon have been swallowed up in the fierce desire that had prompted before now the hope of this very event.

As for Emma, we know from various sources that her

grief was not excessive. Her main preoccupation was herself, her main trouble was her future. The note which she struck, with an unconscious betrayal of the truth, was always the sadness of her position, rather than the sadness of her heart. Madame Le Brun came to London about this time. "She soon came to see me," wrote the lady in her *Memoirs*, "wearing deep mourning, with a dense black veil surrounding her, and she had had her splendid hair cut off to follow the new 'Titus' fashion. . . . She said that she was very much to be pitied, that in her husband she had lost a friend and a father, and that she would never be consoled. I confess that her grief made little impression upon me, since it seemed to me that she was playing a part. I was evidently not mistaken, because a few minutes later, having noticed some music lying on my piano, she took up a lively tune and began to sing it."

Sir William's own feelings as he lay at death's door are harder to fathom. If his blindness to his wife's infidelity was real, he may well have felt just what he expressed in his will—a true affection and deep admiration for the lovable Nelson. It is not hard to explain his blindness. He had always been wrapped up in Emma's beauty; his main pleasure in life was showing her off. The more the onlookers admired, the better he was pleased. Hence Nelson's passionate worship, so far from arousing jealousy or uneasiness, would have delighted the infatuated old man. He was not likely to be suspicious of Emma herself. He knew that she was not sexually inclined; she had come to him with the highest commendation from Greville for her "steadiness in the most frail steps of her sex"; she had shown by her conduct at Naples for fifteen years that Greville had but spoken the truth, and Naples was a hotbed of vice and villainy. If he could feel secure of her there, how much more could he feel safe with Nelson, an Englishman of the highest character and a religious turn of mind? He had been lulled into a sense of security

which, normally speaking, was justified, and he failed to realise the entrance of evil into his paradise. Perhaps it was the better for him, but assuredly it was the worse for Emma.

(2)

Neither Emma nor Greville lost a moment in looking after their affairs. On the 13th of April she wrote to the Prime Minister: "May I trouble you, and but for a moment, in consequence of my irreparable loss; my ever-honoured husband, Sir William Hamilton, being no more, I cannot avoid it, I am forced to petition for a portion of his pension." About the same time she wrote to Lord Melville in the same strain. Nelson was equally active on her behalf. Lord Minto visited Merton, and Emma at once poured out her story: "She told me that she had applied to Mr Addington for a pension, and desired me to promote it in any way I could; and Lord Nelson, coming in, made the same request. I promised to do so." Meanwhile, with shrewd misgivings, Emma tried to spread abroad a new version of her relations with Nelson. She realised more than ever the necessity of a good reputation. With want of discretion, always one of her failings, and want of reticence, equally part of her nature, "she talked," as Lord Minto goes on to record, "very freely of her situation with Nelson, and of the construction the world may have put upon it; but protested that their attachment had been perfectly pure, which I declare I can believe, though I am sure it is of no consequence whether it is so or not. The shocking injury done to Lady Nelson is not made less or greater by anything that may or not have occurred between him and Lady Hamilton." Lord Minto probed direct to the heart of the affair. It was mainly the wrong done to Fanny that stood in the way of a pension; it was Emma's insistence on the purity

of her relations with Nelson that finally destroyed her chances.

Meanwhile her difficulties were increased by Greville, who pounced eagerly on the inheritance for which he had plotted so long—his one real victory. Sir William was hardly in his grave before he was ordering Emma out of the Piccadilly house, and Emma, petulant in defeat, was writing to him in the third person to know how long she might have and when he was going to pay her debts.

Greville now had a chance of proving the spirit in which he had written many years before that he would share his pittance with her. He proved it by deducting income-tax from her annuity, thereby stirring Nelson up to a fresh epithet: "Mr Greville is a shabby fellow." He did for obvious reasons fulfil a promise to his dying uncle, and informed the Government of Sir William's hope that some part of his pension should be continued to Emma. With that he washed his hands of her.

For the moment it was Nelson rather than Emma that suffered. With his usual generosity and more than his usual contempt of Greville, he allowed Emma £100 a month, ostensibly for the upkeep of Merton. She would therefore have been passing rich but for her fatal love of pleasure, which made her rent another house in Clarges Street—this time unnecessarily, for all her belongings might have gone to Merton.

So on the 18th of May Nelson left her—hoping with all her vivid optimism for a pension, and spending it in advance on the gay life which had become essential.

(3)

Nelson was at sea for two and a quarter years, and the details of their lives during this period matter little. More interesting is the development of their feelings for one another.

The separation was long enough to give both a chance of reviewing the situation, and if it were possible, doing something to retrieve their errors. Nelson did—faintly but unmistakably. Emma did not. Yet Emma deserves pity, if sympathy is impossible. For twenty years now she had been petted and spoilt, living in magnificence and careless of money. She was no longer young and adaptable, and what had before been luxuries were now in the nature of necessities. She neither knew how to economise nor perhaps was capable of it. Lastly, she had debts. So much there was on the one hand. On the other she had an income in her own right that would certainly keep her from starving, but would not extend to anything like the style of living to which she was accustomed. Everything depended on Nelson, or on her ability to increase her income from other sources. Nelson was a poor life from all points of view; his health was never very good; his frame was shattered—and he was on active service. It was only to be expected that Emma's one preoccupation should be money. In a sense her continual insistence on her rights, her everlasting petitions, were foresight and not greed. She was genuinely frightened of the prospects.

At all events money—money—money was the one burden of her letters to Nelson throughout the whole of these two and a quarter years. Would he write to the Queen of Naples? Would he write to the Premier? Would he write to the Duke of Queensberry? Would he move this stone or pull that string? Above all, would he instruct his agents to pay for the alterations to Merton and meet this, that, and the other bill? The iteration and insistence on money become tiresome, but are so easily understandable, especially as Emma was growing old and the cartoons showed her up in her expanding unwieldiness. It was this constant haunting fear of poverty that drove her into many of her most brazen

courses. She had thrown in her lot with the Prince's disreputable set, and since the Regency had come to nothing, now tried to squeeze something out of that old *roué*, the Duke of Queensberry. She wanted to get into his will, and even made Nelson write to him on the point. Nelson did, with a certain touch of shame. He vented his disgust by diatribes on the members of his circle.

It is easy enough to blame Emma. No doubt she should have preferred the straight and narrow path, cutting her coat according to her cloth. But it is at least honest to remember what the consequences would have been. Rightly or wrongly Emma's character was lost; if she gave up the benefits of Nelson's passion and the pleasures which money could buy, she would have had precisely nothing to make life tolerable. She would have had to toil in comparative poverty and complete seclusion to bring up her daughter and maintain—what?—a bare existence, without pleasures and shunned by society. She had only two other practical courses, either to clamour for a pension, or to make the most of her fading charms. That she pondered this latter alternative seems fairly clear, and she deserves some credit for rejecting the temptation.

The separation did more for Nelson than for Emma. It toned the wildness of his passion and, by giving greater scope for idealism, raised it to a higher plane. His thoughts turned more and more to marriage, and with the hope his conscience entered into calmer waters. It was easier for him when no longer openly flouting his convictions to write sincerely, "I feel from my soul that God is good, and in his due wisdom will unite us." There is all the difference in the world between this aspiration and the hectic defiance of "now, my own dear wife, for such you are in my eyes and in the face of heaven." It did more for him; it enabled him to put on one side his own

"innocent plan." Emma, fearful perhaps of waning affection, pressed for permission to join him in the *Victory*. Not long before Nelson would have leapt at the chance. Now he put the idea on one side, kindly but firmly. "Only believe," he replied, "that I should be far too happy to embrace my own dear Emma, but I see so many obstacles in the way of what would give us both such supreme felicity, that good sence is obliged to give way to what is right, and I verily believe that I am more likely to be happy with you at Merton than any other place, and that our meeting at Merton is more probable to happen sooner than any wild chase into the Mediterranean."

His feelings, as the months slipped by, became far more tender and exalted. He no longer thought simply of his own longing, but tried to cheer and comfort Emma, pointing along the path most natural to him. "Trust to Providence. . . . Never fear, our cause is just and honourable." He no longer agreed to all she suggested merely for the sake of pleasing her. A tone of kindly advice crept in, a quiet warning here and there against extravagance, a tinge of regret that he had not made more money so that he could relieve her anxieties, and a firm resolve to make a fortune. Horatia, too, occupied more of the picture as well as outside interests; friends and dependents found room in his thoughts. His letters were more those of a loving husband than an anxious lover, and it is a matter for speculation whether, as time went on and the fervour of his passion burnt itself out, the struggle between desire and conscience might not have been renewed, perhaps with a different ending.

But the opportunity never arose. After the weary wait of two years came the slipping out of the French fleet and the hurried chase after Villeneuve to the West Indies and back. It was the beginning of the Trafalgar campaign, and Nelson was to have but a month on shore, and not many weeks longer anywhere.

CHAPTER XXVI

TRAFALGAR

(1)

Villeneuve's sudden chase to the West Indies was but one move in Napoleon's plan for concentrating a superior force in the Channel while he shipped an army across to England. Exactly what his plans were no one knew, but everyone was fully alive to the pressing anxieties of the times.

When news came that the French fleet had slipped out of Toulon and was making for the West Indies, agitation grew to a point. Great Britain had important interests there, the loss of which would be a serious blow. Meanwhile Nelson had pursued in such haste that his fleet had passed out of sight—no one knew where—and this uncertainty boiled up into something of an ugly mood. "Where are you all this time?" wrote the father of one of Nelson's officers, "for that is a point justly agitating the whole country more than I can describe. I fear that your gallant and worthy chief will have much injustice done him on this occasion, for the cry is stirring up fast against him, and the loss of Jamaica would at once sink all his past services into oblivion."

Nelson, with unerring instinct, knew the danger to his reputation, and once more, as in the days before Aboukir, followed his intuitions with unswerving faith but in an agony of mind. His intuitions were right; the West Indies were saved; Villeneuve was driven back to Europe; and the very bitterness of England's first feelings only served to increase the confidence in Nelson that succeeded

them. Fortune, moreover, came to his aid, and his reputation was enhanced by the failure of another admiral. Calder met Villeneuve on his return voyage, and succeeded only in fighting an indecisive battle. The bottled rage of England fell on his devoted head, and by way of readjusting the balance, Nelson's fame was redoubled.

On the 19th August 1805 he landed—the first man in England, the one hope of his country—to spend his last fortnight with Emma. From the popular point of view we know how Nelson stood. "I met Nelson in a mob in Piccadilly," wrote Lord Minto, "and got hold of his arm so that I was mobbed too. It is really quite affecting to see the wonder and admiration, and love and respect of the whole world; and the genuine expression of all these sentiments at once, from gentle and simple, the moment he is seen. It is beyond anything represented in a play or in a poem of fame."

But there is a deeper and more real aspect which peeps out here and there, confirming the hints given in his letters and proclaiming that Nelson was a changed man. Perhaps it was the blossoming of his true character at that age—forty-seven—when his powers were fully matured; perhaps it was the solemnity of foreboding which grew steadily upon him during these last few weeks; perhaps it was the outcome of his long vigil before Toulon where he had had time and to spare to think round the details of his life. At any rate, there was a greater calmness, a deeper humility, a shedding of the quick irritability, a higher perception of the great issues of life, a new outlook on men and things. An extract from a private letter gives an insight into the change. "The best thing I can do," wrote Lady Bessborough, "is to write you an account of a dinner with Lord Nelson: Bess and Ca dined at Crawford's Tuesday to meet him. Both she and he say that so far from appearing vain and full of himself, as one had always heard, he was perfectly unassuming and natural.

Talking of popular applause and his having been mobb'd and huzza'd in the city, Lady Hamilton wanted him to give an account of it, but he stopp'd her. 'Why,' said she, 'you like to be applauded—you cannot deny it.' 'I own it,' he answer'd, 'popular applause is very acceptable and grateful to me, but no man ought to be too much elated by it; it is too precarious to be depended upon, and it may be my turn to feel the tide set as strong against me as ever it did for me.' Everybody join'd in saying they did not believe that could happen to him, but he seem'd persuaded it might, but added: 'Whilst I live I shall do what I think right and best, the Country has a right to that from me, but every man is liable to err in judgement.' . . . He was very kind to Bess, and in taking a letter from her to Clifford [her son] said 'Now kiss it, and I will carry him the letter and the kiss.' He says nothing short of the annihilation of the enemy's fleet will do any good. 'When we meet, God be with us, for we must not part again till one fleet or the other is totally destroy'd.' He hopes to be return'd by Christmas."

There was a fixed and calm resolution in his soul all this short fortnight, flecked only by wistful hopes that he might not be needed. "Mr Pitt," he wrote to a friend, "is pleased to think that my services may be wanted. I hope Calder's victory (which I am most anxiously expecting) will render my going forth unnecessary." And again, "I hold myself ready to go forth whenever I am desired, although God knows I want rest; but self is entirely out of the question."

So he hoped on for fourteen days, and at 5 a.m. on the 2nd September the first intimation came. Captain Blackwood was coming to London with news that Villeneuve had reached Cadiz. He paused in his journey to tell Nelson. "I am sure," said Nelson, who was already up and dressed, "you bring me news of the French and

Spanish fleets, and I think I shall yet have to beat them."

Later in the day—so the story runs—as he was walking with Emma up and down in the garden, he began to speak of drawing back; he had done enough for honour and gained sufficient wealth. Why should he risk his health and all that he held dear? Emma refused to believe him, saying that she knew he was longing to get at the combined fleets, considered them his property, and would be miserable if any man but himself did the business. At last Nelson, with tears in his eyes, exclaimed, "Brave Emma! Good Emma! If there were more Emmas there would be more Nelsons."

The authority for this simple little scene is Emma herself. It has been violently attacked as degrading to Nelson's honour, and almost as violently defended as proving Emma's worth. With deference to those able writers on either side, the scene may very well have taken place exactly as related without either degrading Nelson or exalting Emma. So much depends on motives.

When Nelson first heard the news from Blackwood's mouth the seaman in him would have thought of battle. He would instinctively have voiced his longing to give Villeneuve a drubbing. But we are all creatures of many moods, and when Blackwood had gone, in the stillness of the early dawn, perhaps, too, with the first presentiment of death, he may well have remembered that he was weary and full of honour, that he had been twelve days only with the woman he worshipped and the child he loved; and the thought of separation may have made his heart falter for the moment. If so, Nelson becomes more human, more lovable, not less worthy. Had he been a man of blood and iron he might have broken heads; he would never have broken hearts.

That Emma should have met him in his passing mood of doubt and distraction is probable enough; her mere presence

would have revived it. And as Nelson's feelings were mixed, so we may believe were hers. Probably she had heard of Blackwood's visit and guessed the reason. She came prepared, and in part she may have been enflamed with patriotic feelings. It is difficult to suppose that one so imitative as Emma could have lived with Nelson all those years without picking up something, if only the externals. But other, and less worthy feelings were probably predominant. She may have liked Nelson the man; but she was wholly enamoured of Nelson the Lord and popular hero. She could recall the surge of joy and exultation which had swept Naples at the news of Aboukir; she could hear the shouts of praise that had followed the Saviour of Italy; she could remember the sigh of gratitude and relief that rose after Copenhagen; she could see the triumphal arches and the cheering crowds of the progress to Wales. Nelson's glory was her glory, and she loved to bathe in it, float in it, wallow in it. The days of glory might be renewed, would be renewed on a scale beyond all comparison, when Nelson returned from this greatest victory of all. Of course she would persuade him to go. Why doubt that she did? Why doubt the words "Brave Emma! Good Emma! If there were more Emmas there would be more Nelsons"?

If the story were not probable in itself, there is another reason for believing it. Emma had a lively imagination, but no creative power. She could embroider a tale with wild exaggeration; she never invented a single story. Some substratum of truth there must be, and that substratum is Nelson's love of Emma, and Emma's love of glory. It is idle to blame Nelson; he saw Emma through eyes that we have not as a glorious angel of light. If she had been such an angel as he imagined the tale would have been planted deep in England's inexhaustible sentiment—or more probably would never have passed her lips.

(2)

But true or untrue, with Emma's aid or without it, Nelson went, and the parting was a sad job.

On the 12th of September 1805 Lord Minto was at Merton. "I stayed," he wrote, "till ten at night, and I took a final leave of him. He goes to Portsmouth tonight. Lady Hamilton was in tears all day yesterday, could not eat, and hardly drink, and near swooning, and all at table. It is a strange picture. She tells me nothing can be more pure and ardent than this flame." Strange indeed, and perhaps nothing more strange than Emma's insistence on a lie at such a time.

To Nelson the occasion was one of solemnity and deep feelings, far deeper, far higher than any he had yet displayed. The next night, as the moment for departure drew near, he went up to Horatia's bedroom to pray over the sleeping child, and shortly afterwards poured out his feelings in his diary. "At half past ten drove from dear dear Merton, where I left all which I hold dear in this world, to go to serve my King and Country. May the great God whom I adore enable me to fulfil the expectations of my Country; and if it is His good pleasure that I should return, my thanks will never cease being offered up to the Throne of His Mercy. If it is His good Providence to cut short my days upon earth, I bow with the greatest submission, relying that He will protect those so dear to me, that I may leave behind. His will be done. Amen. Amen. Amen." On the 14th he embarked, and gazing at the crowds that watched him, said with prophetic insight: "I had their huzzas before. Now I have their hearts."

The presentiment of death was not on him alone, but also on Emma. Her tears and swooning were not mere acting, though God knows from what exact feelings they sprang. Largely selfish one must needs believe; largely

motived by fear of the future. "Lord Holland," wrote Lady Bessborough on the 19th of September, "says Lady Hamilton told the Fish that if she could be Lord Nelson's wife for one hour, she should die contented, and that he always invokes her in his prayers before action, and during the battle cries out very often 'For Emma and England.'"

Why this longing to be his wife in name as well as in fact? Why but for the fear that was gripping at her heart, too soon to be realised?

As for the rest, she only spoke the truth. "Did I tell you of seeing Lady Hamilton and the account Captain Blackwood gave of Lord Nelson before the battle?" wrote Lady Bessborough three months later. "He took him to the cabin, and shewing him Lady Hamilton's picture, said, 'This is what inspires me; she loves glory and will either triumph in my fame or weep over my grave.'"

There is no need to tell again in feebler words the epic of Trafalgar. Only, to complete the story of Emma's life, Nelson's last writings must be given.

Nelson to Emma.

"*Victory, October 19th*, 1805, *Noon.*
"CADIZ, E.S.E. 16 LEAGUES.

"My dearest beloved Emma, the dear friend of my bosom. The signal has been made that the Enemy's Combined Fleet are coming out of Port. We have very little wind, so that I have no hopes of seeing them before tomorrow. May the God of Battles crown my endeavours with success; at all events, I will take care that my name shall ever be most dear to you and Horatia, both of whom I love as much as my own life. And as my last writing before the Battle will be to you, so I hope in God that I shall live to finish my letter after the Battle. May Heaven bless you prays your

"NELSON AND BRONTE."

"*October* 20*th*

"In the morning we were close to the Mouth of the Straits, but the wind had not come far enough to the Westward to allow the Combined Fleets to weather the Shoals off Trafalgar; but they were counted as far as forty Sail of Ships of War, which I suppose to be thirty-four of the Line, and six Frigates. A group of them was seen off the Lighthouse of Cadiz this morning, but it blows so very fresh and thick weather, that I rather believe they will go into the Harbour before night. May God Almighty give us success over these fellows, and enable us to get a Peace."

Nelson to Horatia.

"*Victory*, *October* 19*th*, 1805.

"My dearest Angel, I was made happy by the pleasure of receiving your letter of September 19th, and I rejoice to hear that you are so very good a girl, and love my dear Lady Hamilton, who most dearly loves you. Give her a kiss for me. The Combined Fleets of the Enemy are now reported to be coming out of Cadiz; and therefore I answer your letter, my dearest Horatia, to mark to you that you are ever uppermost in my thoughts. I shall be sure of your prayers for my safety, conquest, and speedy return to dear Merton, and our dearest Lady Hamilton. Be a good girl, mind what Miss Connor says to you. Receive, my dearest Horatia, the affectionate parental blessing of your Father,

"NELSON AND BRONTE"

On the morning of the 21st of October he drew up the famous Prayer and Codicil to his will, witnessed by Blackwood and Hardy. They ran:

Prayer

"May the Great God, whom I worship, grant to my country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious victory; and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavours for serving my country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen, Amen, Amen."

Codicil to Lord Nelson's Will

"October the twenty-first, one thousand eight hundred and five, then in sight of the combined fleets of France and Spain, distant about ten miles.

"Whereas the eminent services of Emma Hamilton, widow of the Right Honourable Sir William Hamilton, have been of the very greatest service to our King and country, to my knowledge, without her receiving any reward from either our King or country:—first, that she obtained the King of Spain's letter, in 1796, to his brother, the King of Naples, acquainting him of his intention to declare war against England; from which letter, the Ministry sent out orders to then Sir John Jervis, to strike a stroke, if opportunity offered, against either the arsenals of Spain, or her fleets. That neither of these was done, is not the fault of Lady Hamilton. The opportunity might have been offered. Secondly, the British fleet, under my command, could never have returned the second time to Egypt, had not Lady Hamilton's influence with the Queen of Naples, caused letters to be wrote to the Governor of Syracuse, that he was to encourage the fleet being supplied with everything, should they put into any

port in Sicily. We put into Syracuse, and received every supply, went to Egypt, and destroyed the French fleet. Could I have rewarded these services, I would not now call upon my country; but as that has not been in my power, I leave Emma, Lady Hamilton, therefore, a legacy to my King and country, that they will give her an ample provision to maintain her rank in life. I also leave to the beneficence of my country, my adopted daughter, Horatia Nelson Thompson; and I desire she will use, in future, the name of Nelson only. These are the only favours I ask of my King and country, at this moment, when I am going to fight their battle. May God bless my King and country, and all those who I hold dear. My relations it is needless to mention, they will of course be amply provided for.

"NELSON AND BRONTE.

"*Witness*—HENRY BLACKWOOD.
T. M. HARDY."

A few hours later he was in the company of the immortal.

(3)

The news reached London in November, and even the exultation of victory was somehow merged in Nelson's self. It was Nelson of whom the whole country thought and spoke—so much had his life meant, so much more his death.

Yet in truth his death meant more to Emma than to anyone else. The country knew in a dazed fashion that it had been saved, that Nelson's work was done, and that England's loss was more the power of showing gratitude than the strong arm of a protector. To Emma his life had meant that sense of power and glory which now filled her horizon; his death meant a living eclipse.

The death of husband or wife can produce a peculiar sense of changed values, something almost akin to impotence in the face of new conditions, though it may be numbed by the more poignant feelings of love. In Emma's case that sense of impotence must have been more than usually strong. There was little, if anything, of love to counteract it; but there was an immense void which nothing could fill. The length and breadth of Emma's love had been the reflected light of Nelson's glory. That glory remained and had been multiplied a hundredfold, but the reflection of it on herself had vanished beyond all hope. There was nothing here but a sense of changed values and the impotence of defeat.

So much for her inmost feelings. On the more material side there was added trouble. Nelson's death plunged Emma at once into an emergency, full of gall and bitterness. She was his widow in fact, but not in law. All his belongings were in her possession; all his hopes and wishes were known to her alone. Yet she had no right to the possessions and no power to carry out the wishes. The lawful relations could come and demand all the relics she treasured; the lawful relations could usurp her place as chief mourner; the lawful relations must transact the necessary business, and she must watch helpless the turning over of private papers and the delving into hidden secrets. The protection, the sense of power and security which Nelson had thrown around her, and perhaps most of all the superior glow of the Lady Bountiful dispensing gifts and influence that cost her nothing, all vanished like a morning mist. She was alone and in an extraordinarily difficult position. Her vaunted qualities as a "stateswoman" were never more urgently needed, and never more singularly lacking. She neither knew how to handle the situation nor yet how to leave it alone.

Nelson in his will left her £2000, an allowance of £500

a year from his Bronte estate (which for various reasons was never paid), and Merton. He also left £4000 in trust for Horatia, the interest to be paid to Emma until the child was eighteen years of age. Besides that he left his famous " codicil."

In May 1806 a grateful Government proceeded to give what they regarded as fit rewards to Nelson's family. His brother William, a parson, received an earldom and £120,000; his widow received an annuity of £2000; his two sisters received £10,000 apiece. Emma and Horatia were never mentioned; the codicil was ignored.

What happened to the codicil matters very little, because the line taken by Nelson and Emma would have defeated its intention even had its existence been known. Probably it was. But Emma, falling every day more deeply into debt, and failing to secure a quick recognition of her claims, inevitably became filled with angry suspicions. With the evidence that remains it is not easy to say how far her suspicions were justified. But we do know that the new Earl was not a very desirable character. In common with most of us, he was " on the make," and very anxious to secure for himself all that his brother's fame could give. While Nelson was still alive he courted Emma's favour, throwing out the broadest hints of preferment that he desired. When Nelson died he took steps to press his claims and succeeded. Emma thought he held back the codicil until it was too late; certainly he took no active steps to push it forward. But putting the case at its worst, he merely made sure of his own benefit before attempting anything for Emma. Having satisfied himself, he held out an olive branch, which Emma refused. There is no need to pursue this petty squabble further.

As the remainder of Emma's life is simply a sordid story of debt, punctuated by more and more hysterical " claims,"

it is necessary to deal with the question of the codicil on broader lines. It was always on the basis of her services that Emma made her claims, never on her connection with Nelson. Her services, however meritorious in themselves, were intrinsically worthless to her country, but they did emphasise the fact that she had been an ambassador's wife. This is more than it seems; for it has always been recognised that the widows of eminent public servants have some claim upon the country's gratitude. If Sir William had been a man of striking merit and outstanding personality, and particularly if the manner of his death had been such as to touch the popular imagination, Emma would have been loaded with pensions and caresses. Unfortunately Sir William had no particular merit beyond a charm of manner; he had spent his life doing nothing, and had outstayed his utility and welcome alike. So low had he fallen that he was superseded in his job and found it hard to secure a pension even for himself. When he returned home he slipped into the wrong set, put himself out of court by his feeble handling of the Emma-Nelson situation, and died in apparently good circumstances. There was no reason to commemorate his services, and if he had found it possible to leave large sums to a nephew, there was no very good reason to suppose his widow in distress. It was therefore abundantly possible, as indeed happened, for ministers to admit vaguely that Emma's claims were good and yet fail to take any action. This might very well have happened in any case; it was the more likely to happen in 1803 when the expenses of the war were a crushing burden and the Government had embarked on a policy of retrenchment. Whatever lingering hope remained was killed by the flagrant vulgarity of Emma's conduct.

That was the position up to the time of Nelson's death. Now came Nelson's codicil and, as George Rose admitted, gave a new hope. But only a hope; not the overwhelming

certainty that might have been. Nelson's codicil followed the old lines, reiterated the old claims, repeated the old services. So far as his relations with Emma were concerned, it followed the same path of deception that is so characteristic of their story. It was the ostrich policy that was bound to fail. If he had scrapped the vain recital of Emma's services, and written simply "Horatia is my daughter and Emma her mother; look after them for me," the voice of the nation would have been lifted unmistakably in their favour. Parliament could not and would not have refused a grant. But Nelson did nothing of the kind; he spoke of her services. That he pleaded for her was a matter of moment, but he pleaded in the guise of a disinterested friend; he spoke of her claims, and those claims had to stand on their merits. By carrying his secret, open as it was, to the grave, he carried also Emma's hopes.

The line he had adopted, Emma followed. She did not openly proclaim that Horatia was Nelson's daughter, though in later years she admitted it to individuals. She never admitted herself to be Horatia's mother, and the evidence to this day is only indirect. The deception made everything ring false. She dragged Nelson in, but only as our "immortal and incomparable hero"; it was not so likely to touch an answering chord as "the man who loved me and was the father of my child." She spoke bitterly of the pension granted to Fox's natural daughter—but at least she was a daughter, and what was Horatia? It was a policy that was bound to fail; it lacked the "Nelson touch."

With this failure there is little more interest in Emma's life. She had lost her beauty and her protector, and became the sport and butt of caricaturists. In 1794 Sir William had produced a book of drawings showing Emma in various Attitudes, and entitled "Drawings faithfully copied from Nature at Naples." In 1807 there was

published, with malicious wit, "A New Edition Considerably Enlarged of Attitudes Faithfully Copied from Nature and Humbly Dedicated to all admirers of the Grand and Sublime." A wickedly satirical introduction referred to the edition of 1794 and continued, "since its publication, however, the fair original has so *grown* in grace, and *encreased* in loveliness, that it would be injustice in the highest degree not to pourtray her *as she really is*." One original and one caricature are here reproduced. It was cruel, but it also marks the end of Emma's charms and the utter indifference into which she had fallen. There was no faintest hope of her "return," a fact which makes the more pathetic her stubborn failure to realise the truth and her impotent attempts to press her claims.

She still had a circle of friends, devoted in their way. Nelson's two sisters were loyal to a degree, and Rose—more out of devotion to Nelson's memory than any feeling for Emma—did his best to influence successive ministers. We find traces of her here and there, a disappointed woman driven on by a desperate hope and an unquenchable energy, showing herself here and thrusting herself in there, but always without avail. Even the magic of her Attitudes seems to have waned. The last reference to them that I have been able to find is a letter of the 10th of May 1812: "My last gaiety was at Lady Essex's on Sunday, where Lady Hamilton did attitudes in a shawl of Lady Essex's, who looked inspired and will I hope shortly take to doing them herself"—feeble praise compared with the ravings of all the earlier audiences.

It was soon evident that Merton had to go. Emma tried to persuade the Duke of Queensberry to buy it for £15,000. He refused, but for a time gave her a house at Richmond, and mentioned her in his will. Like so many of her hopes, his will proved a broken reed. She was left an annuity of £500 a year in an unsigned codicil that never became operative. Other friends from the City

came forward and did their best to straighten out her finances. One of them, Goldsmid, bought Merton, and in Emma's words " rescued me from Destruction."

Perhaps they did foolishly. Relieved of immediate anxieties, Emma plunged once more into gaieties, and ran up fresh debts with an ever narrowing circle of friends and acquaintances. Greville died on the 23rd of April 1809; Mrs Cadogan in the early months of 1810; the Duke of Queensberry about the same time. In 1813 the creditors became importunate, and Emma saved herself from imprisonment only by living in Temple Place within the rules of the King's Bench. Again City friends came to her aid, and for a short while she was free, only to be driven back by still fresh creditors. In July 1814 she obtained temporary release again by the kindness of her City friends, and used the opportunity to escape over to France. In January 1815 she died and was buried at Calais.

One last glimpse of Emma remains to be recorded, one that sums up in many ways the strange inconsistencies of her life, the mingled good and bad. Throughout the stormy scenes of her last years she kept Horatia by her side, striving to do right by the child, though often driven by exasperation and want to silly courses. She never won Horatia's affection, but in later years Horatia expressed this opinion of her: " with all Lady Hamilton's faults, and she had many, she had many fine qualities which, had she been placed early in better hands and in different circumstances would have made her a very superior woman. It is but justice on my part to say that, through *all her* difficulties, she invariably, till the last few months, expended on my education etc. the whole of the interest of the sum left me by Lord Nelson, and which was left entirely at her control."

Had she been placed early in better hands and in different circumstances! She could hardly have been placed in

worse hands or more degrading circumstances. Emma's virtues were her own, springing naturally from herself. Emma's vices were inevitable, and the marvel is that they were no greater. Nature was kind; fate inexorable. May she rest in peace.

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